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NUMBER ONE

WE REVIEW THE GIBSON **BOB DYLAN SJ-200** PLAYER'S EDITION

CHANNELLING THE DARK **AURA OF NICK DRAKE**

FIONA BEVAN

THE HOMEGROWN HIT MAKER ON WRITING WITH ED SHEERAN

JAMES MCMUR

THE ALT-COUNTRY MASTERMIND STILL SINGING WITH RAGGED GLORY

ISSUE 104 MAY 2015 UK £4.95



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GEAR ON TEST: FRESHMAN FA400 + BAMBURG JSB & JS + TANGLEWOOD TW170 + GIBSON SJ-200 + ASHBURY AGC-30



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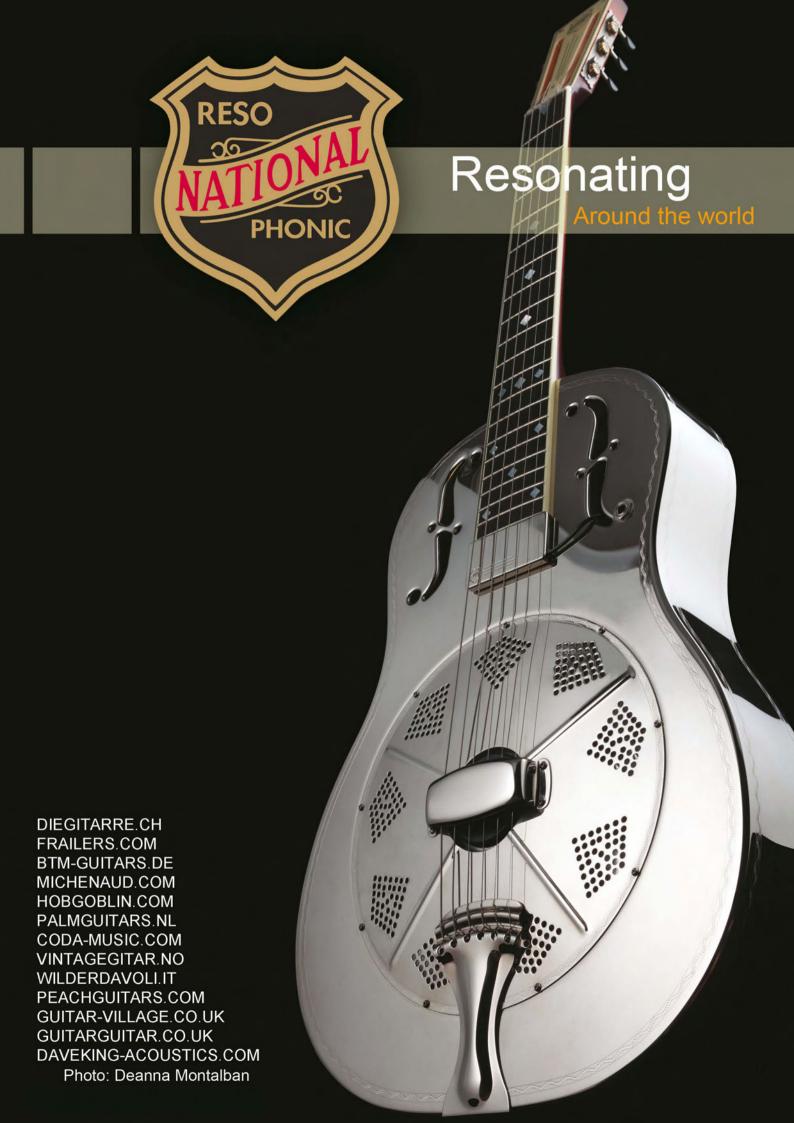
Model shown features Indian Rosewood back and sides paired with a Redwood top, finished with 35 Series appointments. The Wee Lowden is available from selected Lowden retailers worldwide.

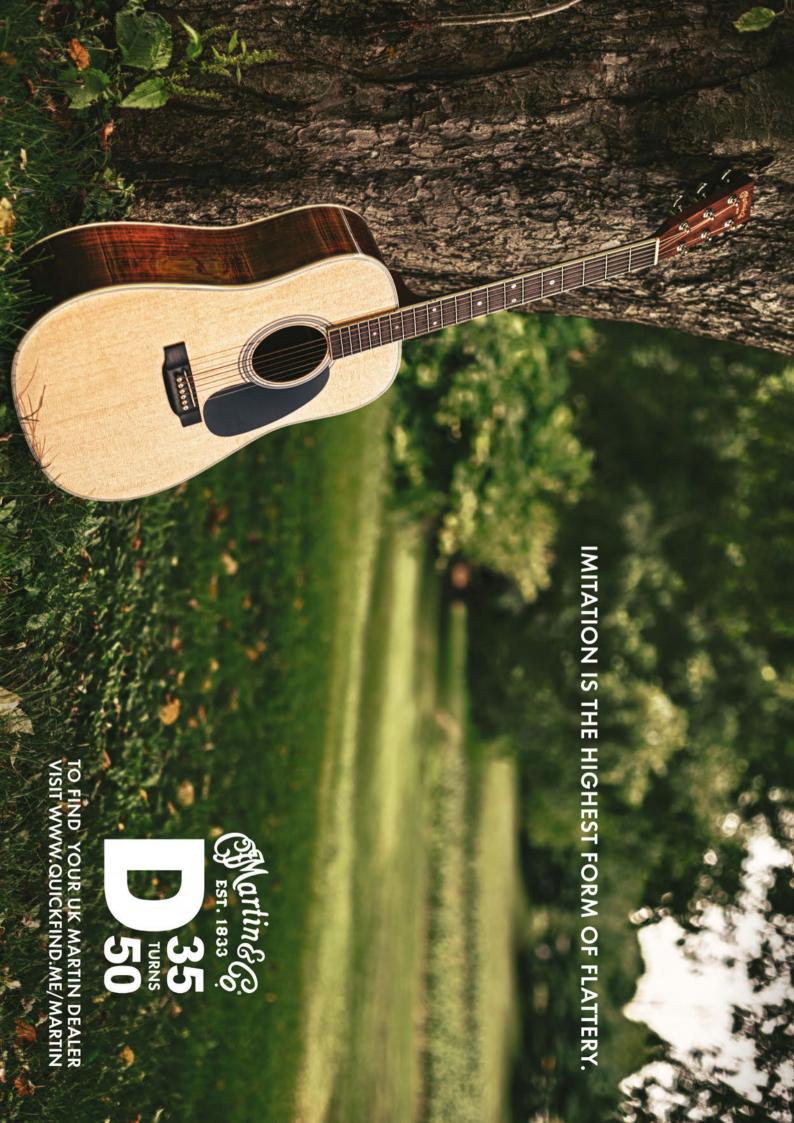
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have great memories of listening to Bob Dylan's music; from my late teens, through to university, and as recently as February this year when he released his 36th studio album Shadows In The Night.

It was probably his 1997 album - his 13th studio release - Time Out Of Mind that made Dylan the great Bob Dylan for me. As an artist who'd already reinvented himself many times over the years, Time Out Of Mind turned out to be Dylan's greatest comeback. I still think that's true. The album almost doesn't make sense - ideas, musings, idiosyncrasies fly in from every direction - yet it somehow still feels like a cohesive masterpiece. So what, then, if it doesn't completely make sense? It doesn't need to. It's mysterious and it doesn't all add up - and that's why I love it. If this is an album you can make after spending 10 years struggling with your musical identity, then sign me up for a decade.

Just before the album's release, Dylan was hospitalised with a heart condition and the album's centerpiece, 'Not Dark Yet', retrospectively sounds like the reflections of a man knockin' on heaven's door, despite the song being written before he was taken ill. The record's atmospheric sound - attributed to producer Daniel Lanois - still rattles around in my head whenever I think of 'Not Dark Yet'. Dylan details the strategic microphone placement and mixing for this record in the first part of his memoir, Chronicles: Volume One. Although he praises Lanois, he does express some dissatisfaction with the overall sound on Time Out Of Mind.

It's a life changing record for me, and no doubt for many songwriters out there. Time Out of Mind was the work of an artist who still sounded like he had something to prove to the ever-expanding list of critics swamping his state of mind. It was subsequently internationally praised - and won three Grammys in 1998, one for album of the year.

It's fitting then, that Gibson has festooned him with two signature edition guitars: the Bob Dylan Autographed SJ-200 Collector's Edition (this retails at just over £7k) and the Bob Dylan SJ-200 Player's Edition (this one is a little more moderately priced at £3,600). It's the latter that you see on the cover of this issue and you can read our take on it over on page 44 - then pick up Playlist for a look at a different side of Bob Dylan.

Aside from Time Out Of Mind, Dylan is, and always will be, three things to me: Freewheelin', Blowin', and Knockin'.

Just before sending this issue to press, I heard the sad news of John Renbourn's passing. A truly superb guitar player, folk trailblazer, and loving man who leaves behind a score of guitarists influenced by his deft playing and legendary contribution to British folk music. Rest in peace, John.

Guy Little Editor

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Compelling storyteller, top-notch guitar picker and travelling troubadour for more than a quarter of a century, James McMurtry is a folk-rock institution. Always a critical sensation, mass appeal has somehow eluded him. Nevertheless, his music is super-charged and superbly crafted.





Writing number a one hit with pal Ed Sheeran saw 31-year-old Fiona Bevan go from unsung hero to multi-platinum selling songstress. Acoustic caught up with her as she surveyed the future, preparing to launch her album in Canada.



ROB SCALLON

Rob Scallon is one of a new breed of musicians who are making a mighty wedge of cash out of YouTube with no need to get on a smelly tour bus. Joel McIver contacts him for a chat about banjos, ukeleles, guitars and guitarleles...

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Improve your playing with our techniques section...

With 10 pages of different level-specific techniques, whether you're a novice or an expert our columns have something for everyone.

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78 THE NEXT BIG THING: MOULETTES

'Come and hear the Moulettes,' they say. 'It'll be a great night out, they say. Nothing prepares you. One minute you're waiting for what you assume is a conventional gig, trying to figure out if that's a cello or a short scale double bass on stage; the next, there's a girl with a white streak in her hair playing bassoon through a pedal board, making a sound to wake the dead, the next four-part harmonies threaten to sweep you out of the room to heaven.

80 ERIC CLAPTON'S SANTA CRUZ

'The beginning of this is back before email. I walked to the mailbox one day and there was an envelope on which the return address was E Clapton, London, England.' So begins the remarkable story of a beautiful instrument in the hands of one of the most celebrated players on the planet and its sometimes bumpy rite of passage over the last 35 years... David Mead talks to the Santa Cruz Guitar Company's Richard Hoover.

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Learn to play 'Keep Your Hands Off Her' by Leadbelly, arranged by Paul Brett.

DESK

YOU ALL OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC.

PRS GUITARS ANNOUNCES NEW SE THINLINE ACOUSTIC

The all-new signature PRS model has been developed in conjunction with Rush's Alex Lifeson



PRS Guitars has continued its relationship with Alex Lifeson of Rush with the announcement of an all-new SE thinline acoustic signature model.

Carrying over its unique appointments from the Private Stock Alex Lifeson acoustic, the new PRS SE Alex Lifeson Thinline model features a thinner body depth than the standard Angelus model and PRS's distinctive "birds in flight" inlay design. As with all SE Series guitars, the Alex Lifeson Thinline acoustic is characterised by exemplary build quality and represents great value. The guitar's thinner body provides excellent comfort - and real on-stage usability - and boasts PRS's Hybrid X/Classical bracing pattern, which contributes a resonance and warmth not found in some thinline models. The addition of an undersaddle pickup with both volume and tone controls also delivers a warm acoustic tone when amplified.

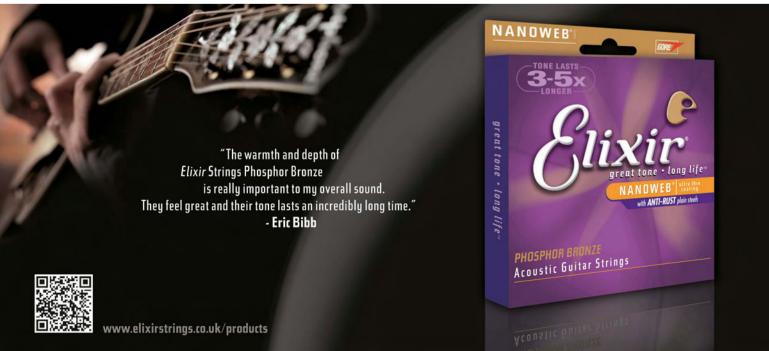
To hear the SE Alex Lifeson Thinline

acoustic in action, and for complete specifications, visit the PRS website: www. prsguitars.com/sealexlifeson

'I was very pleased when PRS presented me with my SE Angelus acoustic, a beautiful guitar of stunning quality. It was in response to the challenge of building a guitar that shared the integrity and attention to detail that the Alex Lifeson Private Stock Angelus possesses in a package more broadly accessible. The SE Alex Lifeson Thinline is that model. Carefully selected materials, expert craftsmanship and a smart approach to concept resulted in a guitar that is beautiful to look at and rewarding to play,' says Alex Lifeson.

The PRS SE Alex Lifeson Thinline acoustic has a retail price of £889 and will be available in Europe from early May 2015.

For more information, visit: www.acousticmagazine.com





C.F. MARTIN & CO. RECEIVES PATENT FOR NECK-TO-BODY JOIN TECHNOLOGY

Signals the marriage of "traditions in craftsmanship and innovative thinking"

C. F. Martin & Co. announced it has received a patent for its guitar-neck-joint router system, originally introduced in 2012.

Created and spearheaded by Theresa Hoffman, engineering project manager at Martin, the machine is a complex combination of measuring sensors, a scanning probe, aluminum tooling and three different cutting tools.

The patented router system uses a scanning probe to measure critical areas of the guitar body and neck. The measurements are then compared to optimal neck fit settings required to obtain a perfect neck fit.

The system will calculate the adjustments required for the proper setup for bridge height and neck-centring and machines areas on the body to create

perfectly matched parts. The system machines the fingerboard and heel areas on the body as well as the final dovetail dimensions, thereby providing a tighter neck joint on the guitar, enhanced tone and improved playability.

'We are proud to receive a patent for one of our technology systems,' said Chris Martin IV, Martin Guitar's CEO and chairman. 'Throughout Martin's 182-year history, our skilled team of engineers and researchers have perfected the marriage of our traditions in craftsmanship with innovative thinking to produce new processes for the next era of guitar building. This patent exemplifies that spirit.'

For more information, visit: www.martinguitar.com

JAMES BAY SET TO HEADLINE BARN ON THE FARM 2015

Brits critics' choice winner joined by Jack Garratt, Rhodes, and Foy Vance

The award-winning Barn On The Farm festival returns to the Gloucestershire countryside this year with another show stopping line-up and an additional third stage for what is set to be a stellar 2015. Brits critics' choice winner James Bay tops the bill in his first ever and only UK headline festival performance of the year. Also on the bill is Jack Garratt, highly tipped Rhodes, and headlining the new stage, Nottingham five-piece Amber Run. Artists also announced include, Foy Vance, Nothing But Thieves, JP Cooper, Alex Vargas, Chasing Grace, Flo Morrissey, Port Isla, Freddie Dickson & The Guard, The Academic, Osca and Louis Berry. With its 1,500 capacity, Barn On The Farm is one of the UK's most intimate and independent music festivals. Tickets are on sale now. Past headliners include Ed Sheeran, Ben Howard, and Bastille.

For more information, visit: www.barnonthefarm.co.uk



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WIN!

A FRESHMAN 12-STRING WORTH £400

If you want to win the Freshman FA1AM12, courtesy of Freshman Guitars, all you have to do is answer the following question correctly! Couldn't be easier. If you need a hint, head over to www.freshmanguitars.net

Freshman Guitars has many notable endorsees, but which Irish duo proudly play Freshman instruments on their debut album *Singing For Strangers?*

- A) HUDSON TAYLOR
- B) TED & DOUGAL
- C) JEDWARD

"The FA1's tone is exceptional. It's incredibly warm and rich – surprising, in view of the body size. Even when I drop tuned the entire guitar to D the warmth remained, with no shortage of nicely proportioned bass response as an additional bonus. Another surprise is that it's relatively easy both to fingerpick and use a plectrum to bring out individual note patterns within chords. It might sound like an obvious attribute for any self-respecting 12-string, but I've found it to be quite rare to find an all-rounder in this respect," says David Mead of the FA1AM12.

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EMAIL: Include 'Freshman Comp' in the subject field, making sure that you enter your answer, name, age, contact telephone number and address in the body of the email and send it over to acousticcomp@blazepublishing.co.uk POST: Complete the form, below, tear off and send FAO Acoustic magazine / Freshman Comp to Blaze Publishing, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5SZ.

Closing date for the Freshman competition is 07 May 2015. The winner will be announced 11 May 2015.



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Please tick if you do not want to hear from Acoustic Magazine or the London Acoustic Show

*Competition entries must arrive no later than the closing date specified. The winner will be announced on 11 May 2015. Only the winner will be contacted. One entry per household. Image(s) of winner may be used for future editorial or advertising purposes. The winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries. No cash alternative is offered. Acoustic magazine reserves the right to substitute the prize for an alternative of equal or greater

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Musicians' Union Musicians Union THE EXPERTS

A GUIDE TO SECURING GIGS ABROAD

■ hinking of gigging abroad? To take your first hop across the water, you'll need to think about many things, from securing gigs to finding funding to getting the right insurance...

ARE YOU PREPPED FOR EXPORT?

Whether you are heading down the showcase, guerrilla gig or festival route, you need to be export-ready. That means that you need to be in a position to prove to bookers overseas that you can haul in a crowd, garner some press attention and put on a good show. And that you have something to promote and sell to the industry. Make sure you have a strong, comprehensive online presence. Be using the right social and digital platforms for the right countries. YouTube will probably be a key part of your plan, as that's where engagers go to hear and see you.

IT'S ALL ABOUT WHO YOU KNOW...

While there are UK-based promoters and bookers with solid contacts who can smooth the passage for bands wanting to tour abroad, they come at a price. If you don't have much in the way of funds at your disposal, arranging a tour will need some lateral thinking and plenty of networking.

'Artists can get overseas gigs by talking to musicians from other countries who are gigging in the UK. Word-of-mouth contacts and recommendations can be invaluable,' says MU live official Kelly Wood.

Focusing on genre-specific festivals and events is a good starting point. You may be able to tap into an existing jazz, folk, heavy metal or other circuit. Want to create a little more buzz? Guerrilla gigs in sitting rooms and empty spaces have only increased in popularity since The Libertines gatecrashed fans' front rooms

in the early 00s - and it's not just the preserve of the lesser-known acts. Prince embarked on his own guerrilla-style tour in 2014, playing an intimate gig in Lianne La Havas' sitting room. Organisations exist to support guerrilla gigs, such as Sofar Sounds (sofarsounds.com) who connect artists willing to play with those eager to host. Another option could be industry showcase events, from Womex in Europe to SXSW in Austin, Texas.

AND THEN THERE'S THE MONEY...

Touring overseas can be expensive. It's not just transport, food and accommodation; take into account the hidden expenses, such as insurance, repair and breakdown costs.

Still, there are ways of getting funding. PRS for Music Foundation's International Showcase Fund, UKTI's Music Export Growth Scheme and the British Council / Arts Council's Artists International Development Fund are good places to start. If you're planning a tour around Europe with gigs in different venues in different countries, we strongly advise you to contact the MU to discuss international differences in tax law.

AN EXPERIENCE FOR LIFE

From the gold rush of showcase events, to the buzz of foreign festivals, and then to the thrill of enjoying cultural differences, playing overseas can provide a lifetime of memories.

For the latest advice on visas, insurance, tax laws and travelling with instruments, get in touch with your regional office via theMU.org





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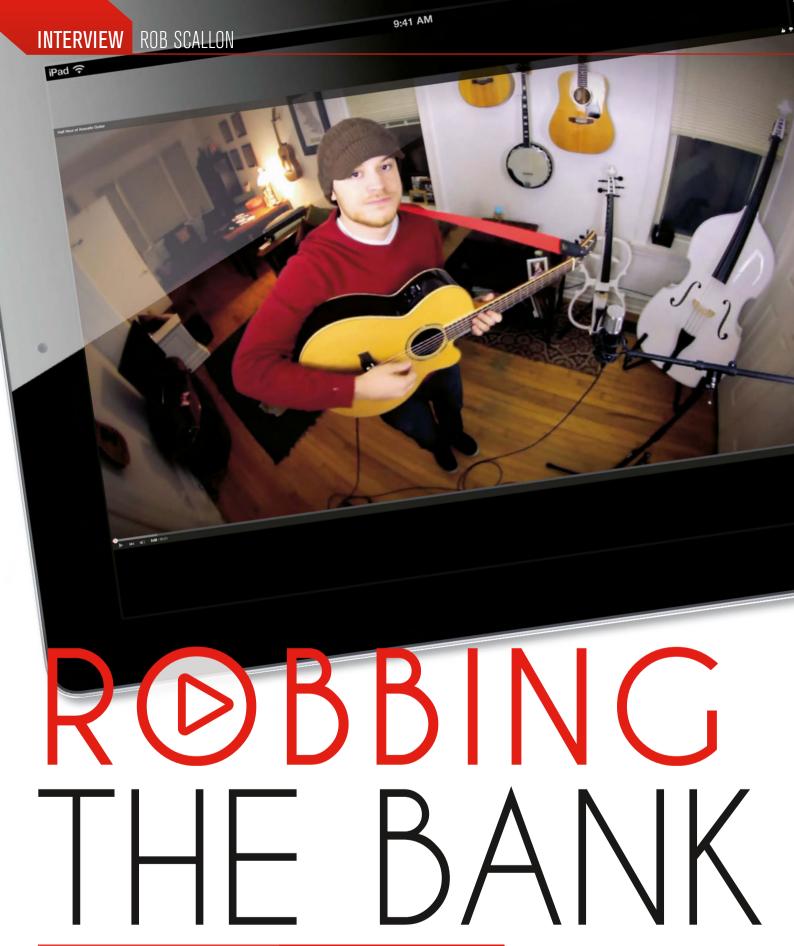
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WORDS: JOEL MCIVER **IMAGES:** ROB SCALLON

Rob Scallon is one of a new breed of musicians who are making a mighty wedge of cash out of YouTube with no need to get on a smelly tour bus. Joel McIver contacts him for a chat about banjos, ukeleles, guitars and guitarleles...



ou will no doubt have read in this and other magazines about the death of the music industry.

Without going too far into the root cause of its decline (or naming any of the record company execs who sat on their fat bonuses and did nothing whilst the public figured out how to rip CDs), let's just say that by 2000 or thereabouts, the old business model of CDs being sold for £18.99 at brickand-mortar record shops was on its way out.

The process took about five years. Once consumers were equipped with CD-burning software, a broadband internet connection and (crucially) access to a host of filesharing websites and programs, it was all over. The winners: people who wanted free music. The losers: record companies, a host of associated industries and - most unjustly the musicians who made the music in the first place.

And yet there is hope for musicians, and ironically it's the internet - the root cause of the problem - which is offering that hope. Go to support.google.com and search for YouTube. Pretty soon you'll come up with a page titled "What kind of content can I monetise?" and there, friends, is your answer. While most of us don't have the kind of tunes that would attract enough views to make us a fortune, or indeed the skills to create the required accompanying videos, a small

number of musos do, and they're laughing all the way to their nearest luthier.

Meet Rob Scallon, a Chicago-based chap with phenomenal abilities on guitar, bass, banjo, and ukulele; a catalogue of cool original and cover songs; an eye for a witty video; and the perseverance to make those things pay.

'I have 260,000 subscribers,' he tells Acoustic. 'To put the business side of it into perspective, when I had 35,000 subscribers I was able to quit my job and go full-time, two years ago. OK, I could only afford to eat ramen noodles at that level: I could just about get by! But the last year has been nuts: I'm gaining maybe 800 or 900 new subscribers a day.'

Yeah, right, I hear you cynical people say - and not without reason. But Scallon isn't simply earning a couple of quid on the side here. Although we're far too polite to ask to see his latest bank statement, the guy is obviously making rather a lot of money.

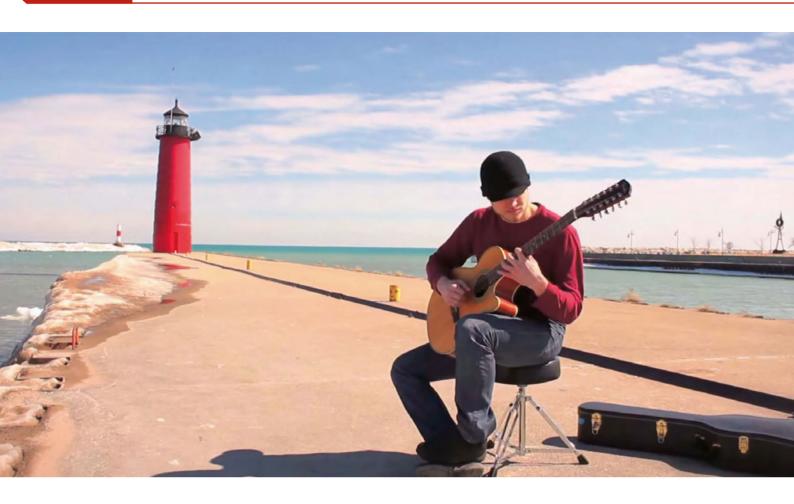
'People always assume that this is just a hobby,' chuckles Scallon. 'They say, "So you make YouTube videos?" and I'm like, "Yeah, I've been doing it for a while" and then they'll say, "Oh cool, so what do you do for a living?" My answer is "That is what I do for a living!" There are a lot of people doing this, and some of them are making millions of dollars. I'm not making seven figures myself, but there are lots of opportunities. When I started out, a lot of people were just starting to establish themselves, and a lot of those people were doing it for a living then - and now, some of these people are incredibly successful entrepreneurs with huge businesses based on online video.'

So how does it work? Essentially Google, owners of YouTube, pay uploaders of selected videos a certain amount of money per view per video. We don't need to ask how much this is: in the era of Spotify and other streaming services that pay users a microscopic amount per stream, it won't be much. But if you have hundreds of thousands of subscribers to your videos, those pennies add up pretty quickly. In Scallon's case, this income means that he never has to smell a roadie's socks.

'I'll have a much more stable income making YouTube videos than I would if I was going out gigging,' he explains. 'I play live very rarely. All I ever wanted was to make music and to make enough money for a stable living, and I have those things now, so for me it's about continuing to do that and growing the numbers across the board as I figure out the business. My goal this year is to hit half a million subscribers.'

Watch a few of Scallon's videos and you'll see that he uses an impressive number of acoustic instruments, in particular as part of his "Metal Songs Played On Non-Metal Instruments" series. Check out his banjo version of Slayer's 'Raining Blood', System Of A Down's 'Chop Suey!' on cello and a ukulele-driven take on Cannibal Corpse's 'Frantic Disembowelment'.

'I have a lot of acoustic instruments,' he tells us. 'I have an endorsement with Kala ukuleles, so I have three of those, one of which is a U-Bass. I have an old Guild steelstring guitar from 1991 that I really love; a Fender 12-string; two banjos; and another



steel-string acoustic which has no brand on it. I also have a guitarlele! Those things are so cool. And I have a nylon-string acoustic. I'm not classically trained, but I can get it to sound OK. I have a few sponsorships with instrument companies coming up, which are nice. I have a video out with Dean Guitars for an ML-shaped ukulele. I have an affiliate link so that when people buy one from there, I get a percentage of it. I also have a relationship with Schecter Guitars, who made me custom eight- and nine-string electric guitars, and I play bass too. I'm happy to play any piece of wood with strings on, basically! The way

I see it is that all strings are going to act the same way: how a string vibrates is not going to change from instrument to instrument, no matter how many strings are on it or how long they are. Once you get a good grasp on a guitar and a bass, you can move onto pretty much anything after that.'

Ah, but has he taken the ultimate step and tackled the Chapman Stick yet? He laughs: 'I've been getting people saying, "You gotta play the Chapman Stick" for years now, on a daily basis. I would really love to, especially with the overwhelming number of asks. Anyway, whatever the instrument

is, I'm really fortunate and I do appreciate my position. Making money with music the traditional way is now almost entirely dried up, unless you're an insanely famous musician who tours all the time, because people aren't buying records like they used to. I tell people that I'm hardly a musician from a business standpoint: I'm a YouTuber. It's more about the videos. Selling my own music is not even 10 percent of my income.'

Scallon appreciates that this new way of surviving as a musician may seem like a fantasy to some people. 'Even people my age don't get it,' he nods. 'I always need to explain how I do it. It's confusing, but the younger people are, the more they get it. It's like the Wild West right now. We're making it up as we go along.'

He also understands that there's a long way to go to reach the top of the video playlist, globally speaking. 'The biggest YouTube channel is by a guy called PewdiePie, who has 35 million subscribers. He literally makes millions of dollars a month, just from playing video games! It's insane. Maybe I chose the wrong thing. Perhaps when I was a kid I should have been playing video games instead of guitar!'

Check out Rob Scallon's videos over on his YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/user/robs70986987





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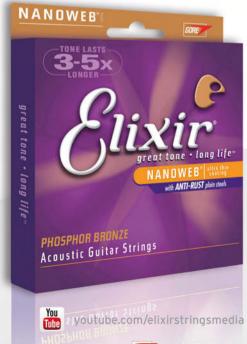
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WORDS: SAM WISE **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

Writing number a one hit with pal Ed Sheeran saw 31-year-old Fiona Bevan go from unsung hero to multi-platinum selling songstress. Acoustic caught up with her as she surveyed the future, preparing to launch her album in Canada.

f rock and roll for women lands somewhere between Nancy Spungen and Janice Joplin, then Fiona Bevan is so charming and engaging as to be incongruous. She looks like the girl next door, talks like a primary school teacher, plays guitar like she was born with it in her hands, and writes songs which will suck you in, grab hold of your heart, and use it to dangle you off a cliff. You may not yet have heard of her, but she's already been part of a band who were protégés of Adam Ant, and co-written a hit for One Direction with Ed Sheeran.

How did you come into playing music? Was your family musical?

I had some instrument lessons as a kid, on piano and violin, because I pestered my mum until she said yes. I was only four, and I was lucky that my mum was really into music and the idea of me having lessons. As a teenager, I stopped having lessons and just started making things up myself because I realised I got more out of that than playing other people's music. Around that time my friend was putting a band together, and I taught myself bass because that's what they needed, and I ended up being the singer too. When that band broke up, I taught myself guitar because I still wanted to do gigs and I thought acoustic guitar would support that.

I read that your family used to sing old movie songs together. What impact did those early experiences have on your writing now?

I think it was really important actually; it's a very sort of "together" thing to do, and I think it did bring us all closer. We would all sing together if we were cooking or just hanging around together at home. I think it was important to my learning, but I didn't think there was anything special about it - I thought that everybody did that. It really got me thinking about harmony because we'd cook up

these four- and five-part harmonies by ear. The way I write now is really aural - I don't write things down and I think it came from that. I've never studied music in a formal way, so those things really were my musical education.

You seem to have developed quite a network of contacts without having yet broken through commercially, how did that happen? It's almost what you see with Brit School graduates.

I'd play every night in a random bar in London, and I've met a lot of my contemporaries through gigging a lot, playing open mic nights, and just getting out there. I wish I'd gone to something like the Brit School, because it can give you a grounding in how the industry works, and I had to learn that stuff the long and hard way. I've always been someone who says yes to things, collaborations particularly, which has led to me doing modern classical music in art galleries, playing jazz stuff, and that's helped me find my sound.



You're a very capable guitar player; do you think of yourself as an instrumentalist as well, or is it just a vehicle for the songs?

I'm not a virtuouso at all; I'm a bit of a jack-of-all-trades, instrumentally. I can express myself in different ways on all sorts of instruments. There's something liberating about not having had lessons; people have always thought it was strange the way I make my chords, and every time I find a new chord, it inspires me. I have really big hands as well, so I can do really big stretches, which people find mind boggling.

What sorts of things trigger you to write?

Well, it could be anything really – if I come across a new riff or a chord on guitar, then that can create a whole new writing sequence for me. There's a song on my album called 'Gold', where I started with a riff, and played it a lot and started to figure out what it was about; I love it when everything, the chords and the melody and the words are about the same thing. Sometimes I start with a line or two, or sometimes it all comes at once. Watching old movies inspires me; listening to music doesn't, because it's too close, but all other art forms do.

Having co-written a hit for One Direction, you could make a comfortable career writing for other people. What keeps you performing?

Actually, it's not a love of being up on stage, but I'm drawn to it as a self-expression thing. A gig is like a communication loop with the audience, where you give out and see what you get back, and I find that really important for trying out new songs. Sometimes I just get offered gigs I can't say no to because of all the fun I'll have and the people who will be there. Also there's a social side to it; at the moment I'm writing a lot, and so I'm tucked away in the studio, literally underground, and it's nice to get out into the light and play a gig. My album came out just about a year ago, so for me, I'm at the end of a cycle, and I'm thinking about the next thing and the new songs, but of course a lot of people haven't heard it. Unless you're Coldplay, and you've really made it, you need to keep your face out there.

What would success look like for you?

I would like to make it to old age, which in the music industry is a success in itself, and I'd like to look back and feel proud of the albums I've made, that they were the best I could have made, and that some of them might have a timeless quality to them. There's something special about making an album that's going to be there when I'm long gone. I'm not thinking about what success is. I'm just trying to do my best, write great songs, enjoy playing with people, and just really enjoy the moment I'm in because that's really all you've got. The other thing I've been thinking about is



women in the music industry, because only 13% of songwriters are female, so I've been getting involved in encouraging other women to write, so I'd love to be part of helping get that balance to 50/50. There are so many wonderful women behind the scenes now in publishing, but not sound engineers, interestingly. It was wonderful to be on these workshops, and meet all these women and help demystify the music business for them.

Tell us about the guitars and gear you use?

When I play live, I play this incredible nylon string Martin with a pickup, which was built in, I think, 1967; it's small bodied, and has a really lovely tone. I don't use much gear on stage, just a tuning pedal and sometimes a stomp box to keep the beat. I use some really weird tunings, like I'll tune down to C#, with a ninth on the top; there are some songs where I've written a song in a particular tuning, and loved it so much that I've ended up writing more songs in it. I use different tunings to make more and stranger chords, to keep inspired, and keep it fresh. I do occasionally

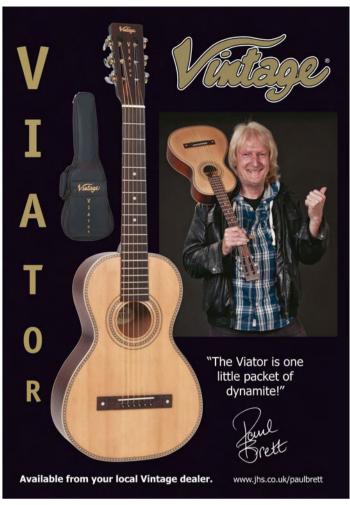
play electric guitar on stage; I've got a ridiculous sparkly gold Italia Maranello, which is a really good guitar, but really trashy looking in a very cool way, which is why I love it. I feel like certain guitars draw different things out of you, and make you play in different ways. I feel like old guitars, which have been played a lot by a certain person are worn away in particular ways which make you want to play certain chords.

What are your future plans?

There will definitely be another album, which is in progress in my brain and on Logic, but I can't give you a definite date. I'm doing a lot of writing at the moment, with lots of young musicians, helping them find their voices, which is really rewarding. My album is about to come out in Canada, so I'm going to do some dates over there, and I've got a few gigs lined up back here, but I'm very much at a transitory point, and excited about what the future will bring.

Fiona Bevan's Talk To Strangers is out now. www.fionabevan.co.uk







nybody's first impression on hearing Joseph Lyons, also known as Eaves,

nybody's first impression on hearing Joseph Lyons, also known as Eaves, might reasonably be how old he sounds. He even has a song titled 'As Old As The Grave', which could be a rational description of a voice that sounds like it has been simmered in oak vats since time began.

Lyons is a singer-songwriter on the crest of huge success. In the space of a year, he has signed a management deal, released his first album, and headed out on his own headlining tour.

'I am not too fond of my name to be honest,' he says about using a musical pseudonym. 'When I started out, I posted some material on YouTube under the name of Injun Joe, the character from the *Tom Sawyer* stories. Then I decided on a change, so I took those songs down, and put my more recent stuff up with the name Eaves. I read the word in the *Three Strangers* story by Thomas Hardy. In the book, it referred to "rain dripping down from the eaves..." and I just loved the sound of the word,



WORDS: ANDY HUGHES **IMAGES:** CARRY ON PRESS

and how it seemed very English, so I adopted it.'

The next thing that strikes you is the wisdom in his words – dark yet unusually spirited tales of love, death, hope and alcoholism which have brought audiences to an attentive silence at gigs, festivals and on tour with the likes of Slow Club and Nick Mulvey, whose gigs he commuted to on a National Express coach, "carrying my guitar bag on the bus!"

Lyons got the musical bug early. His mother was a classical pianist and his father was a Led Zeppelin and Neil Young fan. His father would

sing his favourite songs to a young Joe, not always with the positive impact he hoped for: 'He's not a musician and he sang really badly,' Eaves recalls with a smile. 'I used to think, "Why would I want to listen to songs that sound as bad as that?" Eventually, of course, I discovered them independently, and it dawned on me that these were the songs that my dad used to sing. My mum gave me piano lessons and I used to love picking out tunes with her. Of course, when I got into my teens, it wasn't cool to be a pianist, so I dropped it. Oddly enough, my first band



offered me a place as a keyboard player, but I decided to play guitar instead. I got a cheap guitar and learned some chords, and then the singer dropped out, so I took over vocals as well, and that felt far more natural for me.'

Heavenly Recordings' exciting new signing could be the North's answer to Nick Drake, if the singer-songwriter-pianist wasn't such an amiable and chatty 23-year old, who listens to prog metal bands such as Opeth and Mastodon, as well as Neil Young and Joni Mitchell (who describes Eaves' music as having "this weird psych singersongwriter sound", with lyrics that display thoughts and wisdom far beyond his years).

'It took me a long time to figure out,' Eaves

says of his vocal range. 'I used to listen to Led Zeppelin, and I would learn the songs, and then tune them down on my guitar to a vocal range I could reach - not many people can get to Robert Plant's top notes! I learned where the top of my vocal range was, and where the bottom was, and how I felt comfortable. The emotional range came later when I first started to record myself singing. Listening to my voice everyday, I learned how to get past the parts of the sound of my voice that I hated, and to dig into what I wanted to get over to the listener. I learned that you can visualise the expression on a singer's face from the way they phrase words, and the feeling they put in. Now that I have done some live work, I

have learned to get that feeling across; both the feeling built into the song I have written, and also the way I want to perform it to a live audience. Initially, my emotional input, or output, was quite weak, because my vocal technique wasn't strong, and I lacked the confidence that comes with experience. Now I have learned how to perform properly and consistently, and I can focus on getting that right in a live setting."

'I have always adored Bob Dylan, especially The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan album. When I heard it, it just blew me away. I realised after a while though, that the impact of the song comes in as much the way you sing it as the story you are telling. I think lyrics have to be honest, you

need to be convincing, to believe what you are singing. I think you can tell from a mile off which songs are written because they will hopefully make some money, and which songs are actually expressing something. I've found that getting the driving hard songs over with the band I am with is easier, but I am having to learn how to keep the softer side in as well, to give the evening some light and shade. It's the craft of performance, you learn by doing. I think a lot of it comes from my background, he muses. 'I grew up in Bolton in a family of seven. No family is perfect, but it wasn't the most comfortable environment. A lot of my imagery comes from that working class upbringing and the things that were happening as I was growing up.'

After learning to play piano in his childhood and switching to guitar in his teens, Lyons initially dabbled with his friend's prog rock band, before a place at the Leeds College of Music offered him the opportunity to pursue more serious musical ambitions. It was while he was a student that he was presented with a lifechanging decision. After recording a song called 'Little Rock', which managed to deliver the sound he'd always wanted, he started putting songs online and was receiving substantial interest.

Listeners of Eaves' debut record, What Green Feels Like, will relish the complexity of his guitar parts, which are the result of his eclectic influences: 'I have always loved prog rock, and I always wanted to be the guitarist in a band like Yes or Mastodon. I love the excellence of their playing, the way they put their guitar sounds together, the gaps they leave, the gaps they fill, and the sort of soundscape in my recordings comes from that influence."

Speaking of guitars, Eaves currently plays a C.F. Martin & Co. 00-15M. 'I bought it when I signed my management deal. They told me that the guitar I had was not good enough, and I didn't argue with them! I have always loved Martins and have always wanted one. I can fingerpick, and I get good chordal sounds out of it as well. My only minor gripe is that I can't get the chordal sustain in the studio that I could maybe get with a bigger bodied guitar. I love my Martin. It's the only valuable and precious thing I have ever owned in my life. I do like Takamine guitars, too, and I know some people don't. It's a love-hate thing, which I find hard to understand because I love them. The guitarist in my band, Dan, and I grew up together and used to play around at his house. His stepfather had a really nice Takamine and he told us that whoever got a deal first could have the guitar. I kept telling Dan it had better not be him, because he hated the guitar! I loved it, and I got my deal, and his stepfather kept his word, so I have the Takamine now.'

Still in his early 20s and based in Leeds (having



to much acclaim in November last year, Eaves is now releasing his debut album What Green Feels Like. Beautifully wistful, emotionally powerful and lyrically astute, Eaves' debut album is tinged with a world-weary wisdom that belies his age. His delicate and haunting songs have an ageless quality that touch on his upbringing, dreams and death, and especially the desire to get from where he was to where he wants to be. Taking

'There is quite a lot of layered guitar in the first album, so I need to work out how best to present those. Plus, some of them are quite long, and I want to make sure that the flow of the evening is constant, no big pauses, because I am always mindful of the time - that comes from playing support slots, where time is restricted. I am planning a different approach to the way the second album is played - maybe scale down to six



or seven instruments, not the twenty or so we used on the first one, but that is all in progress, nothing decided just yet. I love the challenge of writing, the need to structure things and make them fit; I really enjoy working on that side of my craft.'

'Everything has happened so fast for me. Getting a deal and an album out has only taken a year, and now I have my first big tour as well, so I haven't had a chance to really plan or think about what comes next. I love writing music, I

do it every day, and I am so lucky to be able to do it. People always say there is a lot of money in music, but believe me, it's not a profession you enter with the idea of making a fortune! There are many people who are just about making a living from music, but masses more than the few who really do well. But it is about doing what is important, and I'd rather make my music and take what comes, than do a day job and not be happy. I could probably have a job that makes more money, but which doesn't have the

freedom that I have. The freedom is important, I am never going to give that up. In 10 years' time, I'd like to have my own house in the middle of nowhere, a studio full of instruments, and for things not to be as intense as they are at the moment. I like green, countryside, creeks and rivers; a bed, a sink and a studio,' he laughs. 'I'm not asking for much.'

Eaves' debut album What Green Feels Like is out now. Eaves tours Europe throughout May. www.facebook.com/josepheavesmusic



JAMES McMURTRY

WORDS: TERI SACCONE

RAGGED GLORY

ompelling storyteller, top-notch guitar picker and travelling troubadour for more than a quarter of a century, James McMurtry is a folk-rock meets alt-country institution. Always a critical sensation, mass appeal has somehow eluded him. Nevertheless, his music is supercharged and superbly crafted.

Complicated Game is his first studio album in six years (and his eighth studio release). McMurtry's provocative lyrics depict the average Joe or Jane, unable to catch a break, never mind grasp the mythical American dream. The album is, like the man himself, a little torn and frayed around the edges, but dynamic at its core. Complicated Game is his most acoustic-orientated record in years.

John Mellencamp got involved with McMurtry early on in his career, producing his first album, the monumental *Too Long In The Wasteland*. Novelist Stephen King became a vocal and loyal fan, championing him on his radio station in Maine, USA, for many years. All along, McMurtry has tirelessly toured both with his band and solo, crisscrossing the 50 states with a few trips to the UK and Europe when possible.

McMurtry spoke to Acoustic from Austin, Texas, where he plays a weekly gig at the local watering hole: the Continental Club. Austin remains a live music mecca, and the man himself is a straight shooter who tells it like it is.

What drives you to make records these days?

I do it because I need the money, and I need to have an album in order to tour. It's as simple as needing to work. I can't tour without new material, and these days touring is the only aspect of music that pays the bills.

But eight years is a long time between albums, right?

I wasn't in any hurry, though. Our tour dates were still drawing pretty well, until they finally started to taper off, and it became more critical. It used to be we'd tour to promote record sales, and now it's the other way around.

How did you manage to find time to record Complicated Game while on tour as it was recorded in Louisiana?

The producer, C.C. Adcock, was in New Orleans, so for a lot of it I wasn't there. I would come in for a week and put some thoughts down and go back out on the road. Mike Napolitano [engineer] and C.C. worked on the record while I was on the road. They brought in Benmont Tench [Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers] for a lot of songs. So I'd come in and out of the studio over the course of a year. The songs were written beforehand – it was the first time I did it this way.

Why did you choose C.C. Adcock to produce?

I just like the way his records sound. He had



a record called *Lafayette Marquis* that he put out a few years ago, which I thought was a great record.

You play banjo, yet you've got guest banjo players on the record.

There are four banjo players on it which probably holds the record for most banjos on any album [laughs].

How hard is it for you to relinquish control in the studio to a producer, having produced your own albums in the past?

It's hard. There were a lot of fights over songs on this album. You have strong viewpoints with an artist, an engineer, and a producer anyway, and then throw in the label people and you have a lot of opinions flying around – it gets ugly.

But why use an outside producer when you can do it yourself - and it's more economical?

I felt like I'd run out of ideas. Everything I learned from John Mellencamp, Lloyd Maines, Don Dixon – I used it all up, everything I remembered from them. I

started repeating myself. I produced four of my records, so, I needed to go back to production school. I've been hanging out with C.C. Adcock and he makes good records, so I thought I'd let him produce it.

You are adept at both piano and guitar. Which did you favour for Complicated Game when it came to writing these songs?

This one was mostly written on guitars, but I write on various guitars. I sometimes write with a baritone guitar and sometimes I'll stumble upon a strange tuning which changes how I write. Even different action will change how I write and then the lyrics will be impacted. A nylon-string guitar or a 12-string will change songs and you have to ferret down the sound. All of these variables help me to write. I try to change my normal brain pattern to get ideas; for example, with baritones you have to play slower because the notes are big and fat - they change my playing and therefore my writing. I like to mess with different instruments like piano, slide guitar - and I play fiddle in a couple of keys too. We had Derek Trucks play

counterpoints rather than me play piano and that worked pretty well.

Tell us about your 12-string guitar...

It's a Takamine that has a Martin headstock. It was made in the 70s. I've not found anything as good to this day. The mid- to late-70s had the best electronics for acoustic guitars. Legend has it that Ricky Skaggs walked into a store one day wanting just to buy pickups to put in his old Martins, but they wouldn't do that so he bought two Takamine guitars and ripped the guts out of them just for the pickups to put in his other guitars. I think that's a waste of rosewood because those things were so well built. I also have a mini Jumbo and some small-bodied guitars – and I use Sunrise pickups.

How do you view your first album, as you have obviously evolved since your early days?

I think I had terrible vocals! I sounded like a wounded moose back then because I didn't know how to sing – plus, I smoked a lot. I got sick about 14 years ago and had to choose between work and smoking.





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Your songwriting is quite visceral, and it covers love, fear and anger; but it's eclectic too, in that you create characters in many of your songs. Are these people based on reality or is it totally fictional?

I take inspiration from people who I know and combine that with things I make up. I do try to weave social commentary and human stuff into everything I write, to a degree.

'Long Island Sound' is an intriguing song that has a Celtic feel, particularly noticeable at the beginning of the song...

Yeah, there are Irish musicians on there. I don't know who they are. C.C. Adcock sent the tape over to Ireland to a bunch of guys he knew. Hence I wasn't on that session. It has come out nicely.

When you began in 1989, Americana and alt-country weren't really genres. Now that whole thing is much bigger.

When I started, there was no Americana. That word didn't exist – neither did alt-country. Triple A radio didn't exist; they tried to market me on AOR [album-oriented rock]. That's all there was back then. But, yeah, although it's bigger it doesn't translate into massive radio play.

You live in Texas but grew up in Northern

Virginia. Did that area influence your music?

The local music that we had when we grew up was bluegrass. My friends and I would not think much of it, but when we had nothing to do we would go over to a club over the Blue Ridge mountains, which would feature either a local band or whatever road act they could get, which would usually be Tacoma Valley Boys or The Country Gentleman. So I did take that in at some juncture. Here in Texas, there's been a real building boom and each time we go out on the road we come back to a new skyline. We've got too many high rises going up next to the clubs. So now the people who moved into those buildings complain about the noise from the clubs. So we've lost a lot of live venues over the years. There are more clubs here for its size than anywhere else in the world, but the city council doesn't support the music.

'We Can't Make It Here' was an anthem of sorts for you (from *Childish Things* in 2005). Did people expect you to be so political from that point on?

Yeah. I think that it became kind of a chain around my neck. I got typecast with that for a while. It's only a fraction of what I do and on *Just Us Kids* [2008] they featured 'Cheney's Toy' as the single which didn't really represent the album.

What's been the secret to your success of sticking around so long, despite not breaking through to the mainstream?

I never quit. I never quit working. I stay out there. I try to keep out on the road because that's the only way you can earn a living from music now. No matter what, I never gave up.

You must have been a little protective of your son Curtis, who is going into the music business, too...

No, not really, because he's pretty clued up about this business – more than I was when I began. Plus, he's very connected with social media and that helps. He's way smarter than me too. He learned to play the guitar on his own, then went to school to learn more, so he's way ahead of me. He has a music degree, too. Besides. I'm a terrible teacher.

What is the one thing that being in the music business for over 25 years has taught you?

That, as live performers, we're all in the beer industry when you get right down to it. I've seen a lot of young bands that think they're artists and that they're not there to sell beer – but we want to keep the club happy, because if the club goes under we don't have a gig.

James McMurtry's Complicated Game is out now. www.jamesmcmurtry.com



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He's one of the world's biggest country acts and has just released his debut UK record **Old Boots, New Dirt** after a smoking set at the recent **C**ountry to Country festival. Here, Jason Aldean talks to us about signature **Gibs**on guitars, singles going platinum in only nine weeks, and goes some way to dispel the myths about "bro-country".



or a long while, Jason Aldean didn't have a name for his now-platinum sixth record Old Boots, New Dirt he and his team struggled so much that they'd refer to it simply as "No. 6". In a reflective mood, one of the US' biggest country stars admits that he made the right choice in eventually settling with the title Old Boots. New Dirt, as it's "the perfect way to sum up where he is".

Let us help you out with the rest: Jason Aldean is the real deal. He is a two-time Academy of Country Music male vocalist of the year winner, and Old Boots, New Dirt was the only country album to be certified platinum in 2014 (it was released in the US ahead of its UK release via Sony International.) The smoking lead single 'Burnin' It Down' earned platinum certification in only nine weeks, making it the fastest selling single of 2014. Aldean has sold over 10 million physical albums and has taken 14 trips to number one on the country radio charts, and he was recently recognised by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) as the top digital male country artist in history, with over 21 million downloads.

When Jason Aldean is off the road, he lives on a large ranch and has a bar in his basement to entertain friends. It's from here that he begins our conversation in between US tour dates about something he clearly loves: the acoustic guitar.

'My dad had an old Fender acoustic guitar,' Jason remembers. 'And a couple of guys used to come over to the house and play it - my uncle was one of them. My dad knew the basic chords, just about enough to play a couple of songs, and he ended up teaching me those basic chords that he knew, and I went on from there, learning the rest of it. I did take some guitar lessons, but the teacher was keen on teaching me all kinds of cheesy songs that he thought were good to play, and he didn't want to teach me the really cool songs that I wanted to learn - so we lasted about three lessons. Then I got hold of a book of guitar chords and just figured out for myself what went where, and that was how I learned to play.'

'My first acoustic guitar was an old Bentley, and I have to say that it wasn't really that good, because I could never get it to stay in tune. I would play through one song, and then I'd have to tune it, and that was how I went on: play a song, tune it, play another song, tune it - like that. My dad told me that if I was serious about the guitar, he would buy me a decent guitar, once I had learned a little bit about it. So, a couple of months later, I was playing better than him, and my dad was true to his word, and he bought me a Takamine Pro Series 6





which had a jumbo body. I kept that guitar right through my first band, and up until I got my record deal and got out on the road. Up to 10 years ago, I was still playing that guitar. Once I got my record deal, I got a deal with Gibson so I retired the Takamine, and it's hanging up in my bar which I have in my basement at home. It's doesn't see live shows now, but that was the first really good guitar that I owned, and it is still important to me.'

You'll now see Jason with a signature Gibson J-200, complete with "Jason Aldean" inlaid in mother-of-pearl up the fretboard.

'I have several of them in different colours and I like those guitars a lot. The Gibsons have a real full sound, whether you mic them or just play them straight. A lot of acoustic guitars have a real high end sound to them; the best you can hope for is that they have a little midrange in there as well. But the Gibsons have a full warm sound, with a lot of range. I tried a

few in the Gibson line, and I did like them, but it was the J-200 that really did what I wanted in terms of the sound I like. I guess I am not as good a guitar player as maybe I ought to be, considering how long I have been doing it. On stage, I mostly tend to play rhythm, and for some songs I don't play the guitar at all in my performances. I guess my practising these days comes down to learning new songs. Because I play the songs I have recorded so much, I do enjoy having new songs to learn because that's a nice change - it's refreshing for

the band and I to have new material to work on. But as far as improving my technique, and becoming a better guitar player, I'd be lying if I said I give that a whole lot of attention!'

'I'm not a real believer in things being technically wrong. I think all musicians pick up little guirks and dinks that make their playing different from what the manual says, but that's what makes all musicians different. You could take a left-handed player who restrings his acoustic and plays it left-handed, and you could say that he is technically playing it wrong, which in a sense he is, but that's what works for him, so does it really matter? I think the capo is a wonderful invention. It has allowed guitar players to avoid some of the really tricky up and down the fretboard stuff they might have had to do to get to some of those tricky chords, and made life a lot simpler for people. I don't see anything wrong with that at all.'

Old Boots, New Dirt is a rock album with a country voice singing on it. It's a mixture of the party songs he's known for, as well as the burning country ballads. He's as much Bon Jovi as Garth Brooks, and on hearing that we had reached that conclusion, Jason is perfectly happy.

'Well, we are a rock band with a country singer, so if that is what you are hearing when you listen to the record, then that makes perfect sense to me. The guys in the band were influenced by a lot of different things; everything from George Jones to Van Halen, and Aerosmith to U2. The boys in the band, and me as well, we like all kinds of music and that goes into the records that we make. The thing is, you can go into the studio with a band and have a set idea of what you want, or you can loosen the collar a little, let them have their heads, and see what everyone comes up with. I am not someone who is going to get into the

> studio with a bunch of guys and tell them what I want, and direct them how to play the songs. What I want is for them to bring what they feel into the studio with them, and we'll try it out different ways until we get a fit that works for all of us. It's about the freedom to experiment a little. If it goes down a road that I really don't like then I will pull the reins back a little and put things back on track for where I think we should be heading. Musicians are creative, you can't be creative for them, and that's what I try to do, let them

create the style that we have."

As the huge sales figures prove, country audiences have embraced Aldean right around the world - he played to a sold-out crowd at the O2 arena as part of the annual Country to Country festival. In the case of streaming figures, Old Boots, New Dirt garnered three million listens over on Spotify in its first week, setting the record for the best-ever debut for a country album on that platform. Aldean subsequently joined ranks with Taylor Swift and pulled his album from Spotify's catalogue. Setting aside the stereotype that country music is all about beers, girls, and trucks, one thing's for sure: Jason Aldean isn't your "bro".

'I think country music still has its stereotypes; people who don't know anything about country music think it is all about wives leaving, and dogs dying, and all that kind of stuff. It is very frustrating for country music artists to still be

loved watching the guys who come out to the front of the stage with an acoustic and play a couple of songs: Garth Brooks is really good at that..."

"I have always

viewed with this narrow idea of what the music and the settings are about. If I find anyone who still thinks that country music is about crops failing and women being unfaithful and all that, I'm likely to give 'em a kick down the highway, because if that is what you are hearing after all this time, then you are just not listening to country music with an open mind. That is so ridiculous to me now: the idea that country music is only about a bunch of guys sitting around on hay bales strumming banjos, when the reality is that country music is one of the biggest musical genres in the world - and has been for a very long time. In terms of the overall production for a country musician touring, they can be as big as anything that is out there.'

'I think that these days a lot more people are open to a lot more varieties of music. Certainly in the States there are plenty of specialist stations around and people can and do jump from one to another. If you are listening to a country station and a song comes on that you don't like, then you can switch over to the pop station, or the rock station, or whatever, and then come back to the country station later to see if there is something there that pricks up your ears. I think country music is music for everyman; it's for the working guy, the stay-at-home mom, the high-school kids, the college kids - it works right across the board. It is accessible to anyone and everyone - and that is your appeal.'

The golden rule is - write what you know. In Jason's case, however, he sings what he knows. 'You're not going hear me sing a lot of songs that are about subjects I know nothing about. Singing what you know is what makes the music real, and that is vital in country music; it has to be real and believable. If I am a shoemaker, and I am on stage trying to convince you that I am a mechanic, you are going to know that I am not singing about something I understand. That's never going to be convincing, so I am a great believer in choosing material that reflects things about life that I can relate to and understand, because then I can make them come over in a way that the audience will relate to and understand. It is all about being genuine. Every songwriter or performer puts their songs over in a slightly different way, but the essential reality of the song is what counts. If you work on a "what you see is what you get" basis, you won't go far wrong.'

Aldean moved to Nashville in 1998 to pursue a songwriting career, but it was never something he truly felt passionate about – he has always been driven by the need to be on a stage performing or being in the studio recording. For his hit 'Burnin' It Down' from Old Boots, New Dirt, Aldean

"The idea that country music is only about a bunch of guys sitting around on hay bales strumming banjos is so ridiculous to Me now. Country MUSIC IS ONE OF the diggest musical genres in the world - and has been for Jery long time.

enlisted the help of friends and tour support act Florida Georgia Line to write it.

'I do still write songs, although my writing is pretty sporadic. I could do it then, and I could do it now if I needed to, but for me, I was always more excited about being up on stage performing, or being in the studio recording and creating music from that end. I am a great believer in looking at the huge number of great songwriters there are out there in Nashville. If I was to write songs and put

them on my album just because I wrote them, I think that would dilute the album. I would much rather seek out the great songs that are out there, and find those and record them and not force my songs in there. I reckon there are only about five or maybe six songs of mine on all the albums I have made. To be honest, I am just not that passionate about songwriting. I can do it, and there are times when I want to do it, but for the most part, I just want to be up there on stage.'



As his tour ticket sales demonstrate, Jason Aldean is a master at choosing songs that work for his audience - so what makes an ideal country song for him? 'It comes back to being real again, and putting something out there that people can relate to. It can be something sad - maybe a relationship broke down, or a friend passed away, or you just had a bad day at work - or it can be something really good like getting ready to go out and have a great weekend partying with your friends.

Any mood you can think of that is something an audience will understand can be the basis for a song. Whatever mood the songwriter is in that day, that is what is going to influence the song that comes out - but making sure the connection is there is what will make it work as a song, both in writing it, and when someone like me comes to perform it.'

'I have always loved watching the guys who will give the band a break and come out to the front of the stage with an acoustic and

play a couple of songs; I always thought that was really cool. Garth Brooks is really good at that, Travis Tritt does the same, and I used to enjoy John Denver's shows when he did that - he was a really accomplished acoustic player. It's great to drop everything back to one acoustic guitar and one voice; it doesn't get much simpler than that - and you get to hear the real strength of the song."

Jason Aldean's Old Boots, New Dirt is out now. www.jasonaldean.com

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Any J-200 wouldn't be complete without the famous "moustache bridge" and here it's rosewood once again, with pearl inlays that reflect the guitar's overall décor admirably

BUILD QUALITY

I did pause to think that Dylan is an unlikely candidate for the signature guitar treatment, as his work has definitely been more about the songs than any particular instrument. Indeed, he's been seen with many different makes of guitar in his hands over the years, including Martins and, of course, the infamous Fender Stratocaster incident, now part of music folklore. But it was a Gibson J-200 – one that originally belonged to George Harrison by all accounts – that graced the cover of his 1969 album Nashville Skyline, and there have been several other guitars bearing "Gibson" on their headstocks that have appeared over the years, so I guess it's appropriate that this long association should be honoured in this fashion.

I've included the specifications for both the Player's and Autographed Collector's editions so that it's possible to see the differences between the two models more clearly. I was a little puzzled about Gibson's reference to "mystic rosewood" for the back and sides of the more expensive version, but then I managed to get a look at one and understood

This isn't a fingerpicker's guitar at all, and I don't believe that Gibson has ever claimed it to be one. This is a big-bellied belter that's all about quality tone to underscore a songwriter's finest and most plaintive outpourings







GIBSON BOB DYLAN SJ-200 PLAYER'S EDITION

Manufacturer: Gibson Model: Bob Dylan SJ-200 Player's

Retail Price: £3599

Body Size: Super Jumbo Made In: USA **Top:** Adirondack spruce Back and Sides: Flamed maple **Neck:** Maple with rosewood strip Fingerboard: Rosewood

Frets: 20 Tuners: Gotoh Nut Width: 44mm Scale Length: 648mm **Onboard Electronics:** LR Baggs

Strings Fitted: Gibson light gauge (.012 - .053)

Gig Bag/Case Included: Gibson Custom Shop hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Gibson Custom Shop quality with a dash of love 'em or hate 'em artistic accouterments

Cons: The "signature model" status could deter a few

Overall: A flagship version of Gibson's renowned SJ-200 with an inventory of great, powerhouse sounds!

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: 00000 **Build Quality:** 00000 Value for Money: OOOOC

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Gibson Guitars / Coda Music www.gibson.com www.coda-music.com

immediately what they meant. If you can imagine some very highly figured rosewood, very similar to some of the wildest Brazilian you've ever seen, then you'd be on the

right track. It really does look gorgeous - and the inlay work is simply stunning. But, as I've said, this is strictly aimed at the collector market, whereas the Player's Edition might only get a chance to bask in the spotlight occasionally.

As for the look of the beast, it's a Marmite thing; you're either going to love all the ornate appointments or hate them. To be honest, in the flesh, it's a lot "subtler" than you'd be led to believe from the photographs; the inlaid double pickguard doesn't shout out at you as much as you'd think and is guite the perfect match for the hand-applied nitrocellulose vintage sunburst finish.

Getting down to business, the top of the SJ is Adirondack spruce, as opposed to triple A-grade Sitka for the Autograph Collector's Edition. The grain pattern is semi-obscured by the sunburst finish, but what I can see looks very businesslike indeed. Of course, a large percentage of the guitar's top is covered by the double pickguard which is festooned with engravings and mother of pearl.

If you've not played a Gibson Super Jumbo before, they really are quite huge. I've said in the past that I have a few problems with dreadnought-sized instruments, but these are bigger still, with a lower bout of around 427mm and an average depth of 111mm. There must be enough air moving in this SJ's body to start a hurricane!

The back and sides here are flamed maple, as opposed to the "mystic rosewood" on the autograph version mentioned above. It's a nice flame - not

outrageous by any means, but very nicely executed. There's a marquetry strip down the centre of the back which adds an extra touch of class as well.

It's flamed maple for the SJ's neck, with a rosewood strip down the centre, leading the eye up to the gold-coloured Gibson Custom Shop logo at the base of the headstock's rear. I have to say that both the serial number and the "Made In USA" indents are virtually unreadable something I'm noticing with the more recent Gibsons. These are traditionally pressed into the wood but they're getting fainter and fainter as

years go by. Six goldcoloured Klusonstyle Gotoh tuners adorn the sides of the headstock, as does the pearl Gibson logo and a decal of Dylan's "Eye Symbol". On the autograph version this is a pearl inlay, but this model features a more cost effective alternative. However, the rosewood fingerboard's position markers are Bella Voce pearl and possibly some of the most ornate that I've ever

> seen. The neck profile is a substantial C which is, for me at least, the almost perfect Goldilocks affair: not too thick or too thin, but just about right. Fretwire is Gibson's standard issue that will feel familiar under any seasoned Gibson aficionado's fingers.

No J-200 would be complete without the famous "moustache bridge", and here it's rosewood once again, with pearl inlays that reflect the guitar's overall décor admirably.

In keeping with the Player's Edition brief, this version of the Dylan signature model is fitted with an LR Baggs Anthem undersaddle / internal microphone system. I've sung the praises of this particular pickup combo before, as it really does bring out the true sound of a guitar's natural acoustic personality. Basically, it comprises a piezo sensor under the guitar's string saddle, combined with the LR Baggs "Tru Mic", a dynamic mic fitted under the guitar's bridge plate and which hovers at 3mm above its surface. The controls are located inside the guitar's soundhole and comprise straightforward volume and mix thumbwheels and a phase button. But we'll get to the amplified version of the Dylan SJ's voice a bit later on. For now, we'll consider its unplugged virtues.

SOUND QUALITY

In spite of the SJ's "Super Jumbo" designation, it's actually surprisingly easy to handle and comfortable to play. True, you have to get used to your right arm being higher than it would be if you were sitting with an OM, but it doesn't take

> acclimatised. Once you do, you're rewarded with a very big sound with a really rich low end. There's plenty of power - and it's useable power, too; the dynamic range can shift between quietly stroked chords and really vigorous strumming without any loss of tonal quality at all. Whereas with some acoustic guitars it's

too long to settle in and become

possible to "overload" them by playing too hard, with the result

that everything becomes tinny and nasty-sounding, here the SJ takes everything in its stride and delivers the goods exactly how vou want them from a melodious whisper to supersized raunch! There's a very subtle

compression to the trebles, to the extent that I think if you were looking for a fingerpicker with

GIBSON BOB DYLAN SJ-200 PLAYER'S EDITION £3,599

GIBSON AUTOGRAPHED **COLLECTOR'S EDITION**

Manufacturer: Gibson

Model: Bob Dylan SJ-200 Autographed

Collector's Edition Retail Price: £7199 **Body Size:** Super Jumbo Made In: USA **Top:** AAA Sitka spruce

Back and Sides: Highly figured "Mystic" Indian rosewood

Neck: Maple with rosewood

Fingerboard: Rosewood

Frets: 20 Tuners: Waverly gold Nut Width: 44mm Scale Length: 648mm Onboard Electronics: N/A Strings Fitted: Gibson light gauge (.012 - .053)

Gig Bag/Case Included: Gibson Custom Shop hard case with embroidered "eye" logo

a pronounced sweetness in this region then you'd come away disappointed. But this isn't a fingerpicker's guitar at all, and I don't believe that Gibson has ever claimed it to be one. This is a big-bellied belter that's all about quality tone to underscore a songwriter's finest and most plaintive

outpourings. Power to the people, eh, Bob?

With the LR Baggs Anthem engaged, the SJ's personality becomes even more strident and powerful-sounding. For these reviews I tend to keep the EQ settings on my AER Compact 60 set flat and try to find something I like using only the preamp controls on the instrument on test. I think that's the fairest way of doing things, anyway. For the SJ, it didn't take too much

tweaking to find something that I could easily work with in a live situation. The simplicity of the Baggs system really is user-friendly, as all I had to do was find an overall volume level and use the blend control to balance the pickup and mic. What I was looking for was the same sound I heard during the pure acoustic tests, and so I wound the volume off and back on until I found it. From then on, vou're set, which bodes well for live work. where short and uncluttered soundchecks can be very gratefully received by the front of house

So I managed to match the plugged and unplugged sounds of the SJ with little or no trouble at all, and from then on in, I could just sit back and enjoy the sounds I was making. Simple.

CONCLUSION

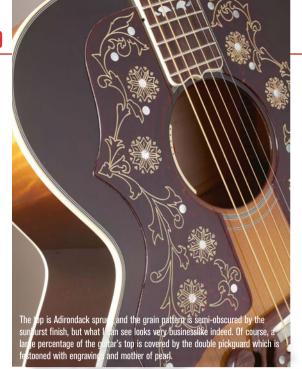
It would have been nice to have had the opportunity to compare the two different Dylan models side by side, as it would have been interesting to hear

what differences in tone the rosewood back and sides brought to the

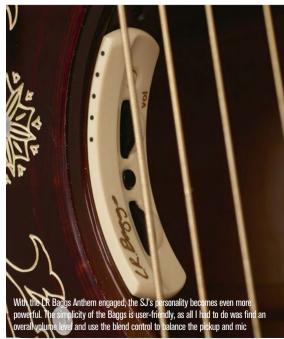
> Autograph version. But I guess that's really not the point with collector editions, as very few of them can expect to see the light of day, bought purely for investment. So the Player Edition is really where the action is in that respect and I must say, it does a fantastic job. It's a great, powerful boombox of good sounds that are ably abetted by the excellent LR Baggs Anthem

pickup system, and would be an asset for any singersongwriter looking for a sixstring sidekick - one with a distinguished provenance - to accompany

David Mead















David Mead revisits the Freshman 400 Series and comes away a little starry eyed...

couple of issues ago, I took a look at the Freshman FA400GA and found myself quite bewitched, as it exceeded expectations on virtually every level. It left me wondering if the same kind of quality was available across the entire Freshman range, and so when I found out that we had the DCEF lurking around at the back of the store cupboard, my hand was first in the air to take it home for a few days. Basically, this is the cutaway dreadnought from the 400 Series, with a Fishman Presys pickup system installed so that we're ready to plug in and play.

BUILD QUALITY

One of the things that impressed me the most about Freshman's Grand Auditorium model was the sheer quality of build and tonal flexibility on offer, in a guitar retailing at under £800. I understand fully that the guitars are designed in Scotland and built in China under the strictest level of scrutiny and quality control available, but it still left me wondering. So I contacted the designer and head honcho at Freshman's helm, Sean Kelly, and asked him to fill in a few details about the manufacturing process in general.

'The 400 Series comes off our high end production line and so it's only certain luthiers who are allowed to put their hands on these guitars,' he told me. 'We hand select





all the timbers for the Fours, Fives, and Sixes now."

And what about the quality control checks? 'We control everything. There are 16 QC checks at the factory; at the end of each line during production, it's stopped and checked. We have a final QC check before they leave the factory and then when they

come in here we inspect and tech before we ship to the stores. So the quality of the instrument that you see as a reviewer is the same as what we send out to the stores'

So, with a fanfare like that, let's put the DCEF under the microscope and see what we find

The soundboard is triple A-grade Engelmann spruce and is at present in the full bloom of youth, in that it's still milky white in hue. I can guarantee, however, that this will start to change before too long, as I have a six-year-old amber Engelmann top about five feet away from me as I write! The binding to the top and back is Canadian maple and the rosette comprises rings of mahogany, topped off with a mock tortoiseshell pick guard. As with the Freshman GA, quality of workmanship here is very high and even twisting and turning the guitar so that I could catch a glimpse inside the soundhole revealed

The back and sides are from graded

naturally dark wood reveals even less of a grain pattern that usual - in certain light it looks almost black, in fact. This is certainly true of the sides, but on the back the patterning is easier to see.



The DCEF's neck is mahogany with a separate heel, and a scarf joint just below the headstock is just about visible under almost forensic levels of examination; the fit really is that good. The gold coloured machine heads are by Grover, with black buttons that could be ebony, but I can't really be sure. In any case, they're very attractive as well as being functional.

There's a rosewood veneer to the front face of the guitar's headstock with the Freshman logo in mother of pearl at the top.

Lower down, we come to the bone nut that sits atop a rosewood fingerboard and 20 nicely finished frets - and by "nicely finished", I mean that they have been polished well and the ends properly filed to leave no sharp edges for the fingers to find. Position markers are, once again, mother of pearl, which takes us back to the body where we find a rosewood bridge, bone saddle and white string pins.

So with all the construction details looking ship shape, I expect you're as eager as I am to know what the DCEF sounds like!

SOUND QUALITY

To begin with, although I usually say at this point that I personally don't find dreadnoughts particularly comfortable to sit and play, the DCEF seems to be an exception - and I'll be darned if I know why. In any case, the neck profile is a fairly generous C and the string action measures in at the lower side of medium. All of this adds up to a very accessible and easy ride, so far - but I haven't mentioned the sound. It's incredibly sweet sounding with a lot of volume in store and none of that cluttered mid range that you sometimes find with dreads. There's also a clarity and separation to the notes, as well as a good amount of the sort of airy sustain you generally find only with top notch rosewoods. Play it fingerstyle and you're rewarded with sultry basses and



FRESHMAN FA400 DCEF

Manufacturer: Freshman Model: FA400DCEF Retail Price: £999

Body Size: Cutaway dreadnought

Made In: China **Top:** AAA Engelmann spruce Back and Sides: Indian rosewood Neck: Mahogany

Fingerboard: Rosewood Frets: 20 Tuners: Grover Nut Width: 43mm Scale Length: 653mm

Presvs Rlend

Strings Fitted: Elixir .012 - .053

Onboard Electronics: Fishman

Left Handers: Yes

Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard shell

nremium case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Easy playability, good tones, stage ready - all for under a grand **Cons:** Nothing to declare...

Overall: An excellent electro cutaway dread with some great tonal attributes - quite simply it's a giant killer!

USTIC RATING

Sound Quality: 00000 **Build Quality:** 00000 Value for Money: OOOOO **5 Stars:** Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to heat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS: Freshman Guitars

www.freshmanguitars.net

singing trebles; use a pick and chords ring out crisply. As I found with the GA,

it's a guitar that will easily take on virtually anything you care to throw

The DECF is armed with a Fishman Presys undersaddle and mic combo with a comprehensive preamp comprising controls for bass, middle, treble, notch filter, mic blend and phase. There's also a built-in tuner and so all points are nicely covered.

Fired up through an amp, the Freshman needed only the tiniest amount of tweaking before I found a sound that complemented its natural acoustic voice. Maybe just a smidge of mid range removed and a hint of the internal mic blended in to add a little more "air" to the mix, and I was good to go. As such, the DCEF seemed quite happy to be played with fingers or pick, shrugging each off like another day at the office - a really good day at the office!

CONCLUSION

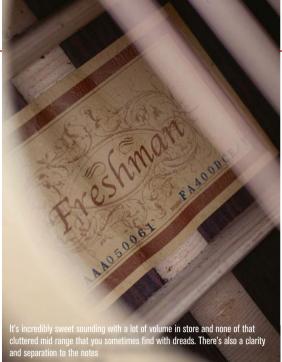
As you can probably tell, I'm as knocked out with the DCEF as I was with the GA. It has the sound and feel of a guitar in a far higher price range than the actual sub £1k tag it carries (including a branded case) and could easily compete with instruments that cost considerably more. As such, it will be interesting to see how the future unfolds for the company as, from what I've seen,

they're headed for the upper reaches of a highly competitive

> Freshman guitars now carry a lifetime warranty.

Designer Sean Kelly tells me that, quite simply, 'We believe in what we do.' I think that says everything.

David Mead

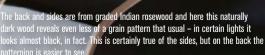






sive preamp comprising controls for bass, middle, treble, notch filter, and phase. There's also a built-in tuner and so all points are covered







COMENADE MUSIC www.promenademusic.co.uk

6 String Acoustics



13028 - Atkin The Forty Three' J45 13027 - Atkin AA Deluxe Custom OOO Figured Walnut 13022 - Atkin OO Am Soecial Parlour Guita 13072 - Alikii Co Am Speala Fairour Guliai 13578 - BSG J10F Jumbo Electro Acoustic, Used 13367 - Brook Lyn 12 Fret Handmade Gultar 13189 - Brook Tamar Medium Jumbo Handmade 13188 - Brook Taw OM Size Handmade Guillar 13366 - Brook Teign Dreadnought Handmade Guiltar 13906 - Cort AD&100P AD Series Acoustic Guitar 13909 - Cort AD&40 CF OP Electro Acoustic 13909 - Cort AD840 CF OP Electro Acoustic 13917 - Cort Earth 100R Natural Acoustic Guitar 13916 - Cort Earth 70 NS Acoustic, Natural Satin 10222 - Cort Earth Grand OP, Open Pore Satin 4612 - Dave King Louise, Koa, Parlour, Natural 4613 - Dave King Louise, Koa, Parlour, Natural 13845 - Eko Ego Legend Parlour Guitar, Sunburst 13844 - Eko Gwierio Pojir Lid Edition Acoustic 13847 - Eko Ranger 6 VR Fastlok, Vint. SB Gloss 13850 - Eko TRI 18 Honey Burst 13550 - Eko Wintane Banger 6 in Black Beissue 13552 - Eko Vintage Ranger 6 in Black, Reissue 6975 - Fender CD60, Black 5096 - Fender CD60, Natural 5079 - Fender CD60, Sunburst 10245 - Fender CD60 Acoustic Guitar, Mahogany 6142 - Gibson Hummingbird in Sunburst 13213 - Gibson J185 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand 13213 - Gibson J185 Acoustic Gullar, Secondhand 7090 - K Yairi New Yorker NY0021B, Natural 13614 - K Yairi YT1 Acoustic Gullar 7970 - LAG T300D Dreadnought, Satin Finish 12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought, Natural 12649 - Lakewood M18 Dreadnought, Natural 12649 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert 12655 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert 12655 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert Acoustic Guitar 13386 - Landola D85 Dreadhought Acoustic, Used 8308 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Black 8310 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Natural 13991 - Martin 000M Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand 13790 - Martin 015 Westside Custom, Ltd Edition 5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural 7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin 6010 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clanton, Natural 13824 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Nat, Used 13581 - Martin SWOMGT Orchestra Shape, Used 9342 - Northwood M80 12 11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG 11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG 11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss 10230 - Seagull S6 Original 13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS 9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo 9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought 13910 - The Cort AF510OP Acoustic Folk Guitar 13910 - The CortAF-5100P Acoustic Folk Guitar 13081 - Vintage V2000MGG Acoustic Guitar 13269 - Vintage V400CSB, Cherry Sunburst 13270 - Vintage V400MP Maple Acoustic Guitar 10929 - Vintage VE2000DLX Gordon Giltrap 13272 - Vintage VJ100NXL Jumbo Series, Natural 8304 - Westcoest SW201 Acoustic, Sunburst 10932 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Redburst 10932 - Westocast SWADI Acoustic Geodourst 12437 - Yairi Fr84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar 12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar 13691 - Yamaha FG411C, Vintage Sunburst, Used 13387 - Yamaha FG720S Yamaha FG720S 13308 - Yamaha FG720S Dinought Brown Sunburst 8019 - YAMAHA FG730S Electro Acoustic Guitar

6 String Electro Acoustics



13866 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Sunburst 13996 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Sunburst 10287 - Breedlove Passport C250COe Electro 10978 - Breedlove Passport C250CMe Electro, Nat 10294 - Breedlove Retro D/EFIe with LR Baggs 10976 - Breedlove Revival DSMe Electro Sunburst 10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE 10918 - Breedlove USA Gold DISRE 10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black 10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cheny 10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red 10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst 13959 - Chord Salamander Electro Acoustic Guitar 13919 - Cort CJ1F NS, Natural Satin 13914 - Cort L150C Concert Electro Natural Satin 13912 - Cort L450C Concert Electro Acoustic, Natural Satin 13908 - Cort MRE NS Electro Acoustic, Natural Satin 13913 - Cort SEVCETNIS Electro Acoustic, Natural Satin 13908 - Cort MHE NS Electro Acoustic, Natural Satt 13913 - Cort SFXCEDNS Electro Acoustic, Natural 13920 - Cort SFX FM TBK, Trans Black 4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black 13862 - Elso TRI 018 CW EQ Honey Burst 12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Cutaway/Electro 9543 - Faith FSCETB Saturn Dreadnought Electro 12360 - Fender Avril Lavigne Newporter 6943 - Fender CD600E, Electro, Black 7024 - Fender CD600E, Dreadnought, Electro, Nat 4335 - Fender CD600E Dreadnought Elec, Sunburst 10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic

6 String Electro Acoustics



12671 - Fender Tony Alva Sonoran SCE, 10150 - Gibson J35 Electro Acoustic Guillar, Nat 13169 - Gibson LC1 Cascade, V. Sunburst, Used 4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature 4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S 6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural 9552 - LAG T300ACE Electro Acoustic Guillar 12666 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic Gualural 9186 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic, Natural 9160 - Lakewood J140P Electro Accisio, National 12674 - Lakewood J140P Jumbo Electro 12672 - Lakewood J140P Jumbo Electro 12678 - Lakewood M140P Grand Concert Electro 12678 - Lakewood M180P Grand Concert Electro 126/8- Lakewood Will But Grand Concert Bectro 12679 - Lakewood Sungha Jung Signature Electro 5407 - Levin LS500CE, Small Electro, Blue 10933 - Levin SW203CETU Electro Acoustic Shurst 13717 - Maestro Raffles FM-CSB A Guitar 13714- Maestro Raffles FM-CSB A Gustom Jumbo 13714 - Maestro Raffles FM-CSB A Custom Jumbo
12966 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro
12790 - Maestro Raffles Mort Small Jumbo Electro
13713 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13713 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13713 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12594 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12791 - Maestro Rosetta SR Dreadnought Electro
12794 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13713 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Medium Jumbo
13714 - Maestro Singa O-CSB Custom Medium Jumbo
13715 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13715 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13065 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
12783 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13715 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13715 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13716 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13717 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13718 - Maestro Victoria With fitted LR Baggs
13718 - Maestro Victoria Wit 2696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro 2702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro

9819 - Hansong CO-0M1000N2 9818 - Painsong CO-W51000N2 9814 - Rainsong DR1000 Graphile Guitar 10097 - Rainsong H-DR1100N2 10100 - Rainsong H-DW1000N2 10098 - Rainsong H-WS1000N2

9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar

- RainSong OM1000 - RainSong OM1000 - RainSong P12 Parlor - RainSong P12 Parlor in Blue - RainSong P12 Parlor in Green

10066 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Brue
10066 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Green
10087 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Pewter
10087 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10093 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Ped
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9823 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9823 - Rainsong S-OM1000N2 OM Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
9828 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
9828 - RainSong Storty Fine Texture SFT Model
7974 - Rainsong WS1000 Graphite Guitar
5257 - Satiori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
82556 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
82556 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
82556 - Satori YD28EQ, OM Electro, Natural
12546 - Seagull Coastline Grand Ol Blectro Acoustic

8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Virti Nat 5255 - Satori YO28ELGO, VM Electro, Natural 12546 - Seegull Coastline Grand OI Electro Acoustic 9536 - Sigma 000MC 15E Electro Acoustic Gultar 13468 - Tanglewood TIPE SPC ELSE Electro Acoustic 13295 - Tanglewood TIPE SPC ELSE Electro Acoustic 13295 - Tanglewood TIPE SPC ELSE Electro Acoustic 13462 - Tanglewood TIPE SPC ELSE Electro Acoustic 13469 - Tanglewood TIV15 SSCE 13469 - Tanglewood TIV15 SSCE 13469 - Tanglewood TIV15 SSCE 13469 - Tanglewood TIV15 SWCE Electro Acoustic 4188 - Tanglewood TIV160 DANE Dreachought Electro 4187 - Tanglewood TIV160 DANE Dreachought Electro 4187 - Tanglewood TIV160 DANE Dreachought Electro 4187 - Tanglewood TIV173 WO DE Acoustic Guitar 13204 - Tanglewood TIV173 WSE 13288 - Tanglewood TIV173 WSE 13288 - Tanglewood TIV179 Pentour Electro 13465 - Taylor 515E Electro Acoustic, Used 9007 - Virtiage Gordon Giltrap Signature 9535 - Walden CG570CE Electro Acoustic Guitar 19031 - Westocast SW201 VT Electro Acoustic Black 8306 - Westocast SW201 VT Electro Acoustic, Nat 13233 - Yamaha AC38 Natural 8202 - Yamaha AC38 Natural 8203 - Yamaha AC38 Natural 8203 - Yamaha AC38 Not March Acoustic Nat 1001 - Virtiage ECY2700 C Electro Acoustic, Nat 1011 - Virtiage ECY2700 C Electro Acoustic, Nat

8020 - Yamaha CPX700, Tinted Finish 9191 - Yamaha FGX730SC Electro Acoustic, Nat 8141 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String Guita

Classical Guitars



13835 - Admira 1000 Classical, No EQ Used 13026 - Admira Concerto Classical Guitar 13021 - Admira Virtuoso Classical Guitar 8587 - Azahar Model 105 Cadete Classical 8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar 6031 - Azahar Model 40B Classical Guitar Joan Cashimira 3A Concert, Used 8584 - Mendieta Conservatoire A Classical 8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical 6777 - Mendieta Estudio S Classical 8240 - Mendieta Estudio T Classical Guitar 2238 - Mendieta Estudio VCE Electro Classical 6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar 6335 - Ramirez 2F Classical Guitar 6028 - Ramirez 4E Classical Guitar 5251 - Ramirez AF Classical Guitar 5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model 6337 - Ramirez R1 Classical Guitar

6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar 8357 - Ramirez R4 Classical Guitar 6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar 12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar 5828 - Roberto 4/4 Classical Guitar 6442 - Roberto C1 Classical Guitar With Bag

6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar 12302 - Tanglewood TCMR1 Classical Guitar 10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red

12 Strings



13865 - Breedlove Pursuit 12 String Acoustic 13907 - Cort Earth 7012ENS Electro 12-String 12227 - Eko 12 String Guitar, Secondhand 13553 - Eko Vintage Ranger 12 in Black, Reissue 9553 - Lag T200D12 12 String Acoustic Guitar 8322 - Levin SW206CETU 12 Strg Ele/Acoustic Gtr 9816 - Rainsong JM3000 Classic Series Electro 9817 - Rainsong WS3000 Classic Series Electro 13988 - Tanglewood TW1200 12-String Acoustic 13475 - Tanglewood TW1200 12-String Acoustic 13475 - Tanglewood TW145 12 SS CE 12706 - Washburn D42S 12 12 String Guitar

Mandolin Family



8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola 8824 - Ashbury AM-370 Mandolin 3527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001 4027 - Breedlove Crossover F Hole Mandolin, Nat 4028 - Breedlove Crossover OO O Hole ,Black 14028 - Breedlove Crossover OO O Hole, Black 12588 - Fender FM(63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst 12540 - Fender FM(63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst 12540 - Fender Mandolin Electric Naudolin 10191 - Fender Mando-Strat Electric Nandolin 4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electric, Natural 4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat 4563 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat 4563 - Jimmy Moon Catave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat 4563 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin (Mandola) Nat 4563 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin (Mandola) Satistic Sat

Travel Guitars



13939 - Eko Tri Mini Honey Burst 3/4 Acoustic 13849 - Eko Tri Mini Natural 3/4 Acoustic 13217 - Maestro IR3 CSB A Meridian Travel Guitar 5214 - Martin & Co LXM Little Martin, Natural 5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar 18856 - Martin Ed Sheeran X Signature Ed Electro 13324 - Martin LX Red Little Martin

7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin 7320 - Martin LX1 Little Martin 7588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel 13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural

Ukuleles

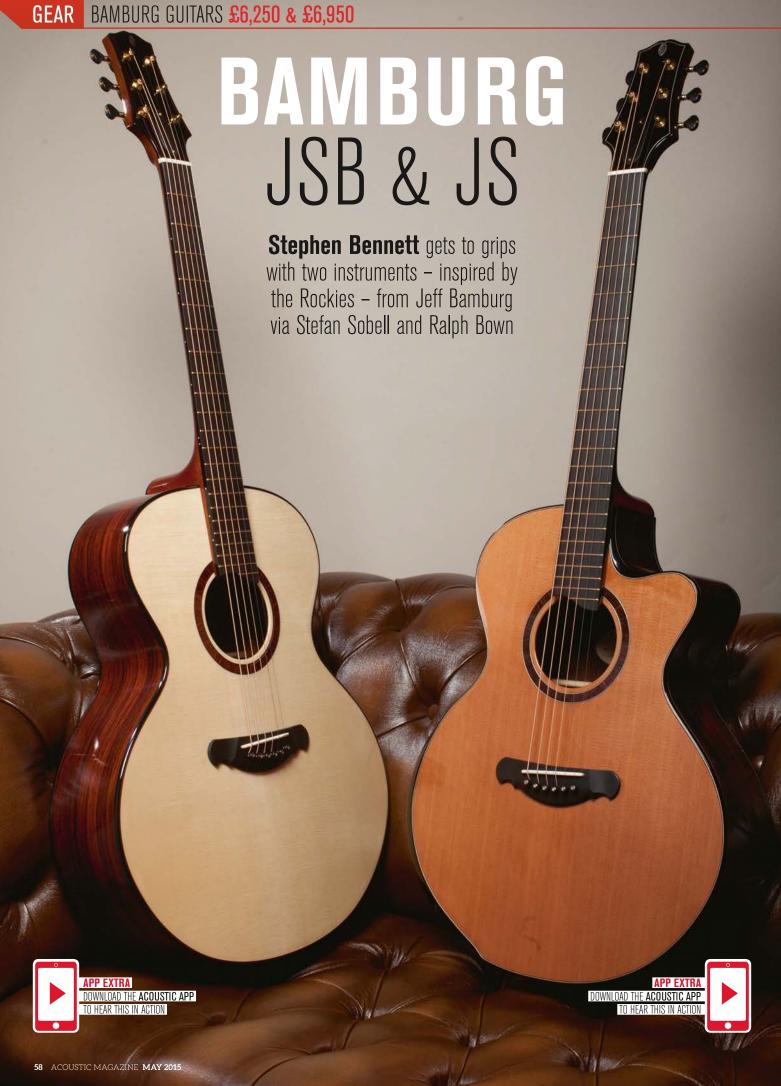


12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ:006 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins BJ:006 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ:1 Banjo Ukulele
2209 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
8208 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
8208 - Delta Blue DUB2F Ukulele Banjo
13016 - Fender Plhalea Soprano Ukulele
13066 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Walnut
12038 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele, Walnut
12338 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele Inc Gigbag
0000 - Kala - 6 Models in Stock Now
12285 - Lag U100C Concert Ukulele with GigBag
13979 - Laka Soprano Ukulele with GigBag
13979 - Laka Soprano Ukulele with Case
10955 - Magic Fluke M20 Natural Fluke Tenor Uke
13883 - Magic Fluke M20 Natural Fluke Tenor Uke
13084 - Magic Fluke M40 Mango Flea Concert Uke
13084 - Magic Fluke M80 Maple Uke Banjo
10058 - Magic Fluke M80 Maple Uke Banjo 10563 - Magic Hulte NBD Wantur Urle Banjo
5010 - Mahalo UTL1 Soyranno Ukulele
0000 - Nukulele - 6 Models in Stock Now
8515 - Ohana BK/22 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK/22 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK/35 Baritone Ukulele
7101 - Ohana BK/35 Baritone Ukulele
7101 - Ohana BK/355 Baritone Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK55 Baritone Ukulele in Mahogany
13633 - Ohana CK158K Concert Ukulele, Black
13634 - Ohana CK158K Concert Ukulele, Blace
13635 - Ohana CK158K Concert Ukulele, Blace
13632 - Ohana CK158K Concert Ukulele, Garnet Red
12607 - Ohana CK157 Concert Ukulele
12605 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13638 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13639 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13639 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13639 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK30MG Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK30MG Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
13630 - Ohana SK10S Opprano Ukulele Pineapple
13637 - Ohana SK10S Opprano Ukulele Pineapple
13636 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele Ineapple
13636 - Ohana SK30S Soprano Ukulele
13636 - Ohana SK30S Soprano 7006 - Orlaria SK/S15E Slim Electro Soprano Uke 4708 - Ohana TK/10 Tenor Ukulele 4708 - Ohana TK/35G Tenor Ukulele 12511 - Ohana TK/35G Tenor Ukulele 12511 - Ohana TK/35 Tenor Ukulele 12590 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag 13311 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag 13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag 13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag 13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag 13009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo 12522 - Recording King RU998 Resonator Ukulele 12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele 12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele 10384 - Risa Electric Soprano Ukulele, UKS363MP 10385 - Risa UKS385MP Soldr Concert Electro Uke 9639 - Stago USX SPA Soprano Uke Spatted Maple 10426 - Uluru III Tenor Ukulele 10426 - Uluru III Tenor Ukulele 10425 - Uluru III Concert Ukulele 10433 - Uluru Pukana LA IIC Cutaway Concert Uke 13033 - Vox Ukelectric 33 Ukulele, Blackburst

Acoustic Amplification



0000 - AER - 12 Models in Stock Now 0000 - Acus One - 8 Models in Stock Now 13832 - Bag For Acus One Ten AC 1099 13830 - Acus One Ten, Black 13831 - Acus One Ten, Wood Firsh 13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp 10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp 8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo 9166 - Loudbox Artist 4548 - Eistman Loudbox Miris - 60W 146 5" 8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo 9166 - Loudbox Artist 4546 - Fishmen Loudbox Mini - 60W, 1x6.5" 5266 - Fishmen SA220 - 220w, 6x4" 9711 - Laney LA12C Acoustic Amp Combo 13282 - Marikhaes AC101 Acoustic Combo 6770 - Marshall AS100D - 50W + 26W 13966 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8" 6771 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8" 4573 - Peavey Ecoustic E20 - 20W, 1x8" 4572 - Peavey Ecoustic E20 - 20W, 1x8" 4976 - Roland AC33 30W - 1x5" 9358 - Roland AC33, Rosewood 11129 - Roland AC33, Rosewood 11129 - Roland AC340 Acoustic Chorus Guitar Ampillier 6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Chorus Guitar Ampillier 6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Cuitar Combo, RW 5574 - Roland Cube Street 2.542.5W, 6.5 0000 - Tanglewood - 3 Models in Stock Now 10337 - Yamaha THRSAAcoustic Amp







obody's quite sure who first suggested that "writing about music is like dancing about architecture" but whoever it was hadn't even begun to consider the complexity - some might say futility - of trying to communicate the particular sound qualities of a unique, handmade instrument, even to the most curious and savvy reader. What separates a fine wine from a decent plonk? Why is one book literature and another pulp fiction? The result of any "compare and contrast" will always remain subjective, up to a point, but fortunately, most of us can detect quality when we experience it. Take Jeff Bamburg's guitars (I wish); radiating class and understated elegance in the same way that a vintage E-Type doesn't need to worry about adding fins at the back. Expensive, maybe, but then you get what you pay for. No furry dice here.

Bamburg's workshop, 7,000 feet up in the old railroad town of Salida, Colorado, overlooks the headwaters of the Arkansas River and it's from there, with the Rocky Mountain high peaks framed in his window, that he reveals some of the finer details of his working process. He calls himself a toolmaker, hopefully furnishing artists with the means to express their ideas to the full. He's as happy talking about the clean air, the woods and the water outside as he is dissecting the minutiae of tone and precision craftsmanship; displaying a refreshing lack of pretentiousness that's echoed in the clean, simple lines of his guitars.

BAMBURG JSB

The JSB model is a 16-inch, fingerstyle jumbo in Indian rosewood (back and sides) and Great Western cedar (top), and includes some increasingly familiar design elements in modern, high-end luthiery; a Kevin Ryanstyle arm bevel (with "Grit" Laskin-inspired carved detailing towards the lower bout) and a bevelled Venetian cutaway. Like its big brother, it features a cantilevered neck that leaves the fretboard floating just above the body of the instrument and extending over the soundhole, theoretically allowing the soundboard/ top to vibrate that bit more freely over a consequently less "restricted" area. Easy neck removal facilitates any simple action adjustments, with two carbon rods running the length of the neck and into the headstock, proving the necessary stiffness and stability. Bamburg describes the bevel-edged cutaway - also an occasional feature of Gerald Sheppard and Kathy Wingert's instruments - as primarily an aesthetic choice to offset and balance the look of the arm-bevel, but also a lot more work! Either way, it's a perfect example of form and function in harmony: this guitar is as comfortable to hold as an old cushion.

It's also lovely to look at. There's an old Chanel theory that subtlety, enhanced by one small adornment, will outshine any amount of bling - the diamond pin on the "little black dress" being the classic example - and Bamburg illustrates this by way of a small and

BAMBURG JSB

Manufacturer: Bamburo Model: JSB Retail Price: £6,950

Body Size: Jumbo Made In: USA **Top:** Western red cedar

Back and Sides: Indian rosewood **Neck:** Cantilevered mahogany Fingerboard: Ebony

Frets: 21 **Bridge:** Ebony Tuners: Gotoh 510 Nut Width: 1.75' Scale Length: 25.4" Case Included: Ameritage custom

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A great example of fine American luthiery with an incredible back story to it also

Cons: Nope, nothing here Overall: A fingerstyle soloist's dream.

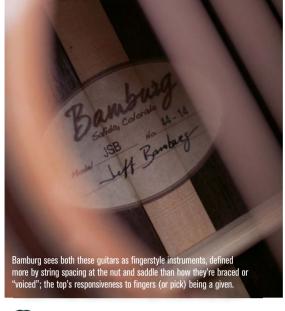
ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: 00000 **Build Quality:** 00000 Value for Money: OOOOO

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

The North American Guitar www.thenorthamericanguitar.com

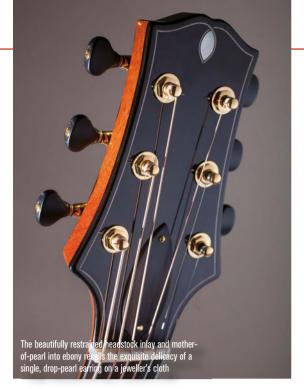


beautifully restrained headstock inlay, mother-of-pearl into ebony, that recalls the exquisite delicacy of a single, drop-pearl earring on a jeweller's cloth. The same rich, grand-piano-black ebony

reappears at the back of the headstock and on the heel. The woods, overall, glow with a deep, animal-coat warmth; Bamburg uses polyester varnish, as opposed to nitrocellulose lacquer, for both durability and a high-gloss finish but is always careful not to lay it on too heavily and so end up killing the sound. The back and sides are sprayed with around four coats whereas the tops only get a couple. It's a surface that may mark more easily than some but then you probably won't be throwing this thing around the kitchen.

There's an immaculate sense of line, whether in the detail or the whole; the beautifully carved bridge has an almost C&W-style curve and the Honduran mahogany neck (1.75 inches at the nut,





the off. The inclusion of Gotoh 510 tuners provides all the reassurance needed that while the wood is doing its job, the wire is also performing exactly as planned. Action-wise, it's as smooth as oil on glass.

And so to that top. Cedar has a "receivedwisdom" reputation; rumours of its limitations are out there - too much warmth at the expense of brightness, an inherently narrower dynamic range compared to spruce - and they're hard to dispel. As a consequence, many dealers are reluctant to carry cedar-topped instruments. Nevertheless, with untreated cedar being softer to the touch than spruce - you can dig a fingernail in - Bamburg likes the fact that he can leave a cedar top that bit thicker when searching for the frequency responses he's looking for. This guitar certainly responds. Hit a single, unwound-string note on the JSB and the word is "full"; it hangs heavy in the air. There's no "reediness" there. Instead, when the player digs in a bit, there's real power and volume allied to a crystal clarity that reflects those Colorado river waters

> a craftsman who really understands his material and though any new guitar is still under the impression it's a tree, this one will blossom and develop, in its wood-heaven after-life, into a fingerstyle soloist's dream.

Bamburg finds so inspiring. It's the work of

Bamburg sees both these guitars as fingerstyle instruments, defined more by string spacing at the nut and saddle than how they're

braced or "voiced"; the top's responsiveness to fingers (or pick) being a given. In the building process, he's trying to blend a bit of science with the intuition developed over years "at the bench" (since the early 90s) or listening to the guitars of other builders and players whose work he admires. Having strived without any great success to emulate Leo Kottke's sound

BAMBURG JB

Manufacturer: Bamburg Model: JB

Retail Price: £6,250 Body Size: Jumbo Made In: USA **Top:** Engelmann spruce Back and Sides: Cocobolo **Neck:** Cantilevered mahogany Fingerboard: Ebony

Frets: 21 (plus half, tapered fretboard end)

Bridge: Ebony Tuners: Gotoh 510 Nut Width: 1.75' Scale Length: 25.4"

Case Included: Ameritage custom

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: It's a muscular and articulate creature boasting a huge range of dynamic tones

Cons: Nothing to report

Overall: A versatile instrument in that it excels in both fingerstyle and

flat-picking modes

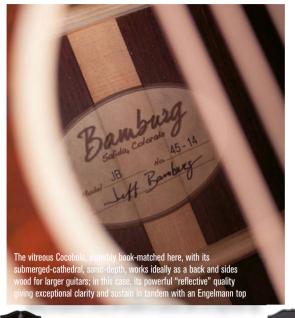
ACOUSTIC RATI

Sound Quality: 00000 **Build Quality:** 00000 Value for Money: OOOOO

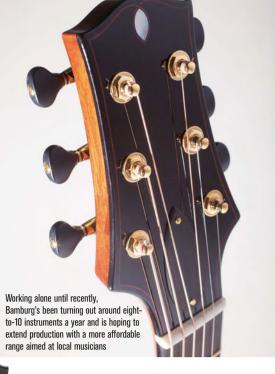
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

The North American Guitar www.thenorthamericanguitar.com



via the classic rosewood and Sitka combination. Bamburg picked up an all-mahogany instrument for the first time and readjusted his sights accordingly from then on. It was an epiphany with regard to what different woods can do tone-wise. Thus, in the never-ending search for that elusive, indefinable sound in his head (all luthiers must have it, though it clearly varies), Bamburg uses a sine-wave generator to test his tops before and after bracing. Where some might build to a specified thickness, Bamburg goes for the particular frequency and stiffness in the wood. The rate of vibration detected by the generator helps to indicate how the top will project that special sound once it's glued to the body of the guitar. The machine is simply another tool in the bag; a means towards attaining a target rather than any guarantee of perfect



and a confirmation that the "feel" he's getting from the wood is on the right track. Subsequent adjustments can be incredibly fine and Bamburg believes a thousandth of an inch shaved off a top (or a brace) with a drum thickness-sander can make all the difference to the tone of the finished instrument.

BAMBURG JB

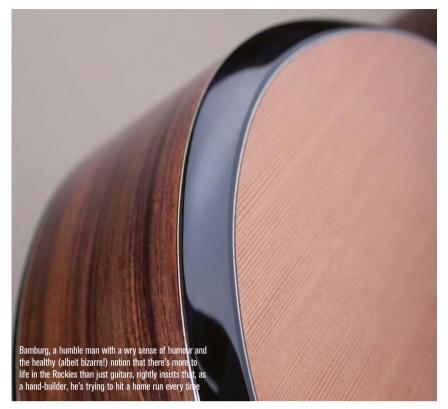
The JB model is a full-size, 17-inch jumbo and in this combination (Cocobolo back and sides with an Engelmann spruce top) it's a muscular and articulate creature boasting a width of dynamic range that ensures the big, fat trebles (as can so often happen) don't get lost beneath its floor-shaking, bottom-end boom. It's versatile, too, in that it excels in both fingerstyle and flat-picking modes. The vitreous Cocobolo, superbly book-matched here, with its submerged-cathedral, sonic-depth, works ideally as a back and sides wood for larger guitars; in this case, its powerful "reflective" quality giving exceptional clarity and sustain in tandem with an

Engelmann top - as soft as spruce gets that doesn't have the brash, metallic clang of Sitka. Again, the elegant, signature Bamburg touches adorn the classically-restrained lines; cantilevered fretboard (in this case allowing easier access to the upper frets in a non-cutaway model), subtle coach work around the headstock and that matching, pearl earring inlay reminiscent of the quiet, deco

luxury of those majestic early Stromberg designs.

The JB sustains forever. The open chord I left it on is probably still hovering now and, while length of sustain doesn't always equate to quality of tone, it does here. The notes seem to exhale and bloom in the air; not as an amorphous cloud but as individual droplets of



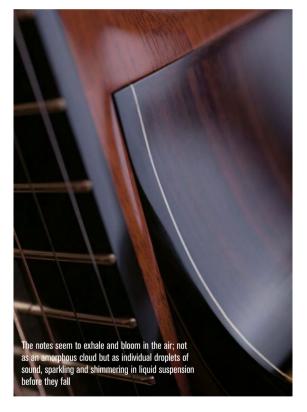




sound, sparkling and shimmering in liquid suspension before they fall. The response is almost telepathically immediate to the player's touch and so loud, in fact, there's an initial suspicion that getting all fast and fiddly on the JB might flood the ear with a thickly-entangled, Pot Noodle of sonic overtones. It never happens, either with pick or fingers. This guitar deals with whatever gets thrown at it with the eagerness of a big, friendly Labrador. Similarly, at the top end of the neck there's that piano power, single-note resonance only found in the highest quality instruments.

The technically-minded will note that the scalelength matches the JSB at 25.5 inches, likewise the nut and saddle widths (see above) while aesthetes will prefer to reflect on another masterfully-executed, unity-of-design concept; the rosettes on both guitars are formed from a 12-piece, segmented ring of the back wood; the cocobolo on the JB standing out in especially striking contrast to the almost bone-white of the Engelmann top.

While these guitars stand in exalted US and Canadian company with the likes of Greenfield, Olsen and Berkowitz, Bamburg reveals a source of inspiration much closer to home (ours, not his). He came to England 10 years ago and visited Ralph Bown in York before venturing further north to meet Stefan Sobell, from whom he learned the arcane mysteries of flexing and tapping wood in order to figure out what exactly it was he should be listening for. Sobell told him, "If it rings like aluminum, whatever it is, make a guitar out of it". The advice clearly sank in because Jeff Bamburg's guitars certainly ring. Working alone until recently, he's been turning out around eightto-10 instruments a year and is hoping to extend production with a more affordable range aimed at (and built in consultation with) local musicians - that admirably down-to-earth "tools for artists" thing again. Each new build is seen as a uniquely evolving, organic process: unlike with the factory that's happy



subscribing to the "80-10-10" approach (out of 100, 80 guitars that do the job, 10 that are outstanding and another 10 that, well, they'll sell anyway).

Bamburg, a humble man with a wry sense of humour and the healthy (albeit bizarre!) notion that there's more to life in the Rockies than just guitars, rightly insists that, as a hand-builder, he's trying to hit a home run every time. That being the case, Jeff Bamburg has certainly knocked it out of the park (twice) with these two.

Stephen Bennett



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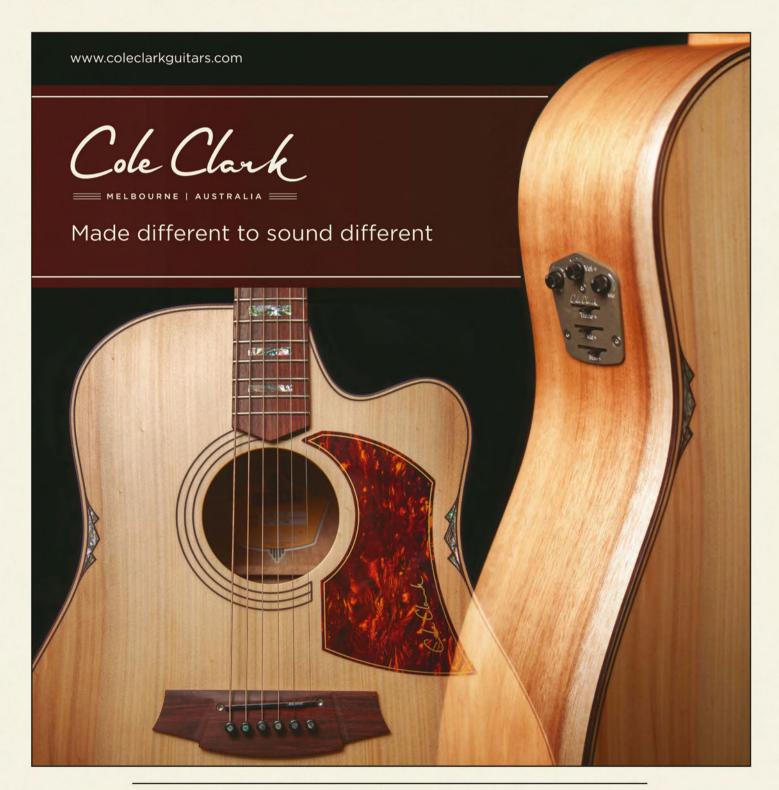
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David Mead looks at an orchestra model from Tanglewood

■ anglewood is a name that we're beginning to see more and more on the headstocks of players as diverse as Paul Carrack and Imelda May. We've reviewed many models in these pages before, the consensus being that they provide excellent value for money with instruments that span the range of sub-£1k acoustics. This particular guitar is from the company's Premier range, the crown inlay at the 12th fret hinting that it might be something very special indeed...

BUILD QUALITY

As with many of the items from the Tanglewood range that I've seen in the past, the TW170 is a very good looking instrument. This is bolstered by the fact that it has a very classy low sheen finish to it, which makes it look and feel more "woody", if you know what I mean. In any case, if the term Orchestra size is a little vague, I'll give you a more accurate idea of its dimensions by once again wielding my ruler. The upper bout is approx 294mm and the lower is around 390mm with a depth of 110mm measured at the bottom and 95mm at the top. So it's just shy of being a full on dreadnought, the real difference being in the narrower waistline.

According to Tanglewood, the top is AA grade Sitka spruce, but if you're at all concerned with the differences between single A grade (which I don't think I've ever seen on a guitar) and five A grade then I must admit that it's a mystery to me, too. Put it this way, I don't think it's a very strict grading system! Having said





that, the spruce here looks perfectly workmanlike to me. The grain patterning might not be perfectly even, but I've seen master grade instruments where this has been the case, too. As I say, mysterious. The back and sides of the TW170

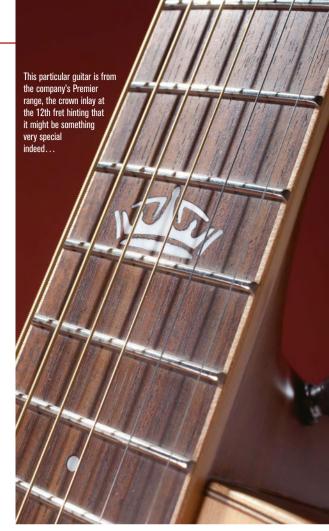
are laminated mahogany and I have to congratulate Tanglewood here, because I actually had to check with them to be sure. The grain pattern inside and out seems to match, making me think originally that it was solid, but it was only the price tag that made me take the time to check. I've said before that an instrument with laminated back and sides is no second class citizen in the acoustic world, there being a few hand

The binding around the top of the guitar is maple with black-whiteblack purfling, with maple once again around the back. So far workmanship is top notch - very much what we're accustomed to seeing from instruments built in China today.

makers who employ them by choice.

Moving on, a maple-capped heel with a second strap peg affixed to the lower side - begins the mahogany neck which has a volute at the base of the headstock, offering a little vintage chic to the guitar's appearance. Tuners are unbranded Kluson style with silver coloured metal buttons.

> On the other side a rosewood veneer bears the Tanglewood logo before the strings travel over the 43mm Nubone nut and down the rosewood fingerboard. Another touch of class - which is very unusual at this price point - is that the



with maple to match the bindings on the body. It's a nice touch - both attractive and practical at the same time.

Mother of pearl fretboard markers trail down the neck with a crown marking the 12th fret. I would actually have preferred the usual double dot, the crown looking slightly out of place to these weary eyes. But that's just me; take no notice and go about your business.

Arriving back at the body end of the TW170, there's a rosewood bridge and compensated Nubone saddle plus abalone rosette and mock tortoiseshell scratchplate rounding things off nicely. As I've said, this is a really good looking instrument and so top marks to Tanglewood on the aesthetic front. Now let's hear what the guitar has to offer from a tonal perspective.

SOUND QUALITY

The first thing I noticed when I first picked the TW up to play it was the low action. I think it's probably the sleekest I've seen on a factory built acoustic; I swear it's just a smidge over 2mm on the bass side, for instance. This adds up to a comfy playing experience, but I was a little concerned that it might also lead to a bit of fret buzz, too. However, even when subjected to some quite enthusiastic fingerpicking and positively exuberant strumming, the TW170 remains clean; naturally I pushed it into overdrive, but even then there was only the merest hint of any metal-on-metal interference.

Overall, the sound from this instrument is really very nice. It would be true to say that I've played orchestra models with a lot more bass before now, but not many in this price range. Played with a pick, the TW reveals itself as a bold strummer, with a good set of trebles and mids and some quite considerable oomph to its dynamic range. I had to keep reminding myself that

TANGLEWOOD TW170 ORCHESTRA

Manufacturer: Tanglewood Model: TW170 SS Retail Price: £370 Body Size: Orchestra Made In: China **Top:** Sitka spruce Back and Sides: Mahogany

Neck: Mahogany Fingerboard: Rosewood

Frets: 20

Tuners: Kluson style Nut Width: 43mm Scale Length: 650mm

Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP 11 (.012 - .053)

Left Handers: No Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ISTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great quality in the sub-£500 price range **Cons:** A little more bass, please... **Overall:** Tanglewood take another stride forward in their mission to deliver top quality instruments at bargain prices!

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: 0000 **Build Quality:** 00000 Value for Money: OOOOO **5 Stars:** Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS: Tanglewood Guitars

www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk

this guitar retails at well under

£500 - it feels more expensive, if you see what I mean - and so perhaps I was expecting too much when I went looking for a little more bottom end.

Played fingerstyle, the Tanglewood responded with some considerable subtlety and the right kind of delicate warmth to the sound. So much so, in fact, that I carried on playing it long after it was necessary in order to complete this review!

CONCLUSION

I think we're looking at another success story from Tanglewood with the TW170. There are refinements here that I really wouldn't expect at this price point and it's an incredibly easy guitar to play. It has a range of tones that would be good at twice the price, but here, at the sub-£400 mark, are really quite exceptional. How would I improve it? A little more bass end would be nice, but apart from that I don't think you could cram any more features into a guitar at this price. It's a fiercely competitive market out there, but with instruments of this quality on offer, I think Tanglewood are well on their way to further success.

David Mead









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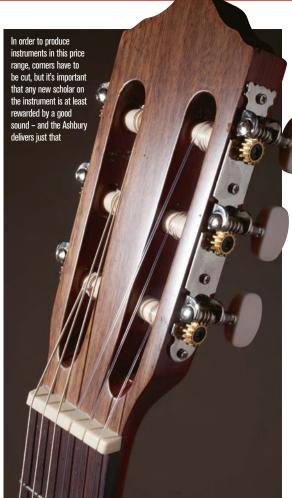












David Mead considers an entry level classical guitar and finds that his Bach is worse than... practically everything else!

e last heard from Ashbury a couple of issues ago when I looked at instruments from their bouzouki and mandolin ranges. This time we return closer to home by examining one of their classical guitars aimed at the entry level / beginner market. The AGC-30 sits in the middle of the three different models on offer, the AGC-32 being a three quarter size classical and the top of range AGC-40 being an electro cutaway.

BUILD QUALITY

It's actually refreshing to take a day off from caressing the guitar world's most treasured exotica, in the form of instruments with four figure price tags, and recall that we all had to start somewhere - and for many of us it was with a guitar like this one. I would say that most parents, at one time or another, are faced with this dilemma - their offspring start to take an interest in playing a musical instrument and they wonder if it's going to be just another passing phase or an ongoing commitment. That's where the entry level guitar market comes in and saves the day, with well-built but inexpensive instruments that allow access to the big wide world of music, without costing a fortune





in the process. The AGC-30 retails at a very respectable £110, and so it's obvious that corners have been cut in manufacture in order to bring it in on budget. The key question is whether it plays well or not. The label on the box that this

guitar arrived in bore a sticker saying "Plywood Classic", and so needless to say the spruce top is a laminate. In fact, spruce might strike you as an odd choice of wood for a classical guitar's top, as traditionally they tend to be cedar. But as the spruce in this instance is only wafer thin, it's not so much a sonic issue as a purely decorative one. As such, it's a fine looking piece of laminate that does the job admirably. The rosette too is a decal as opposed to an inlay, which is another way to curb costs at the point of construction.

The AGC-30's back and sides are mahogany - again, not solid wood - and feature a broad grain pattern with no back strip and are finished with a satin lacquer. Bindings around the top and back of the body are black with around 1mm of white and round off everything this end of the business nicely.

The neck is mahogany with a twopiece heel, and there's a very narrow gap where it's possible to see the join around the mid section. On an instrument at

> this price level, it's not much of an issue, since it's not going to affect either tone or playability. All the same, I would have thought it was easily avoidable. Moving up the neck, everything

else is in order. The profile here is a wide D, as is common with classical necks, the nut being considerably wider than that on a steel

> string acoustic. Tuners are the traditional open geared three-a-side variety, with creamcoloured plastic buttons and an

> > engraved

nickel panel.

Moving on to the fretboard, it's rosewood all the way



with 19 nicely polished frets and only the merest hint of rough ends that really aren't an issue, as it's nigh on impossible to feel them when playing the guitar. The action is set fairly high if you're used to looking at steel string instruments, but this is a common factor with nylon strings. Being more flexible than steel, more clearance is needed above the fretboard, hence the higher action. This is offset by the fact that the string tension is much lower than that of steel string acoustics - around 90lb as opposed to an average of 160lb - and so, whilst the eye might consider the action to be high, the fingers don't.

A rosewood bridge rounds off the AGC-30's exterior furnishings, with the strings neatly tied around the bridge block at the rear.

As I have said, in order to produce instruments in this price range, corners have to be cut, but it's important that any new scholar on the instrument is rewarded by a good sound at least, so let's see how the Ashbury fares in that department.

SOUND QUALITY

I will admit that I wasn't expecting too much from the Ashbury when I tuned it up ready for playing. But what a surprise; it actually has a very sweet sound with a fine set of dynamics, too. The trebles are very nice and respond well to both free and rest strokes. Basses, meanwhile, are crisp with a good amount of depth, presence and sustain.

One of the crucial elements of nylon string guitars is how in tune they are at the 12th fret octave, as this

ASHBURY AGC-30

Manufacturer: Ashbury Model: AGC-30 Retail Price: £110 Body Size: Full size classical Made In: Vietnam **Top:** Spruce

Back and Sides: Mahogany Neck: Mahogany

Fingerboard: Rosewood Frets: 19

Tuners: Open nickel, classic style

Nut Width: 53mm Scale Length: 650mm Strings Fitted: D'Addario Gig Bag/Case Included: No ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Good sounds from an entry level quitar **Cons:** Gap in the heel shouldn't really be there **Overall:** Good basic beginner's instrument where the emphasis is on sound and playability

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: 0000 **Build Quality:** 0000 Value for Money: ♥♥♥ **5 Stars:** Superb, almost faultless. 4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat. 3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well. 2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

Hobgoblin Music

www.hobgoblin.com www.ashburyquitars.com obviously affects the tuning overall. So I tested the AGC with an electronic tuner, and all six strings were fine, falling well within acceptable limits.

My classical guitar repertoire isn't huge - although once upon a time I could dash off a perfectly respectable 'Cavatina' at the drop of a hat - but what I remember from my youth sounded really very good on the Ashbury, to the extent that I was actually enjoying paying a quick visit down memory lane!

CONCLUSION

Seeing as we're dealing with the entry level field here, it's important to remember that the main criteria where any judgement on my part is concerned – must centre around the sound and playability of the instrument, rather than the luxury of its fixtures and fittings. As a teacher, I have seen students having to fight with their instruments to get anything resembling a good sound from them, and this shouldn't be the case. The early days of playing rely on a reward system and the instrument itself shouldn't stand in the way. In this way, the Ashbury scores highly. It's an unfussy guitar with a really very nice sound that would enhance any early learner's progress towards those all-

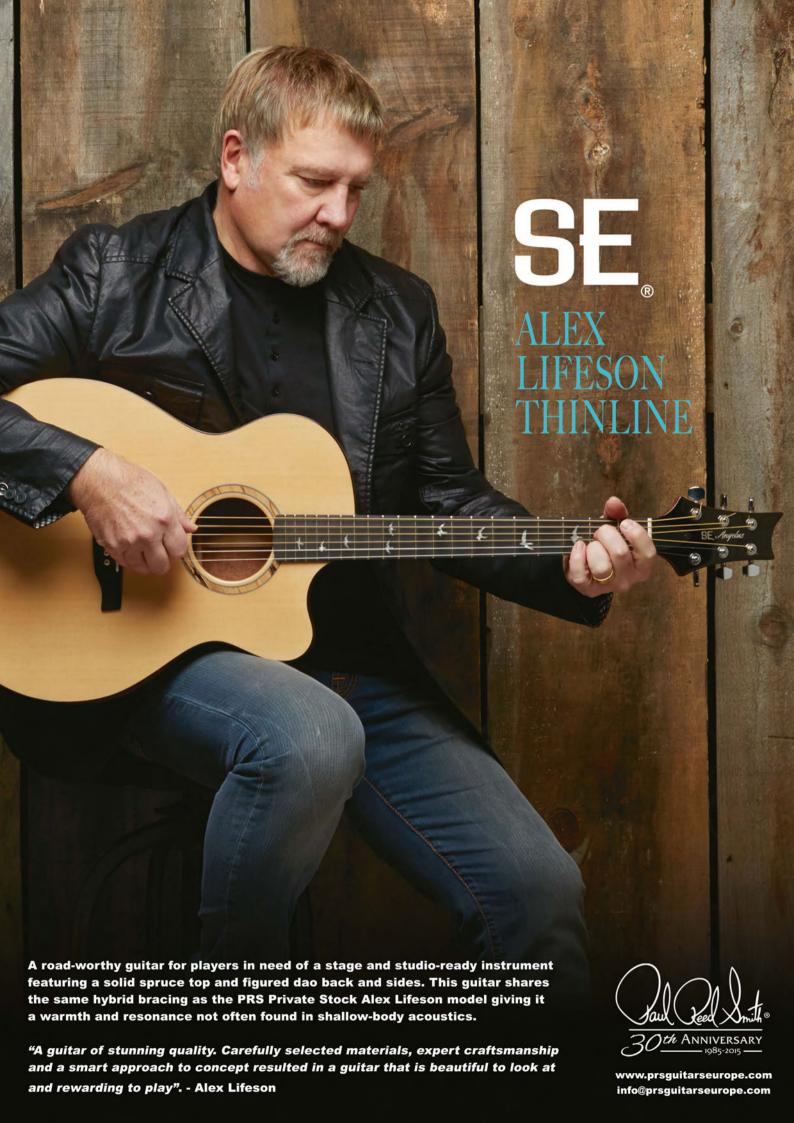


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ome and hear the Moulettes,' they say. 'It'll be a great night out,' they say. Nothing prepares you. One minute you're waiting for what you assume is a conventional gig, trying to figure out if that's a cello or a short scale double bass on stage, the next, there's a girl with a white streak in her hair playing bassoon through a pedal board, making a sound to wake the dead, the next four-part harmonies threaten to sweep you out of the room to heaven, and then your feet are stomping to an unlikely but irresistible brand of progfolk. The Moulettes are a force of nature, and catching up with them was as challenging as that description suggests, so we made the most of the time we could get with cellist, lead vocalist and writer Hannah Miller.

A line-up and style as eclectic as the Moulettes doesn't happen simply because a "guitarist and bass player seek drummer" advert is placed in the music shop window, it requires a back story worthy of a Marvel

The back story is quite a long and winding one. Ollie [Austin, drums and vocals], Ruth [Skipper, bassoon, autoharp and synth] and I have been friends for years playing music together and in that time, lots of great musicians passed through; all of whom brought their own ideas and influences to the music - Rob Skipper [Holloways/ Urban Voodoo Machine], Ted Dwane [Mumford & Sons] were both founding members. Georgina Leach, an extraordinary violinist, was a member for a long time. Ted returned to record The Bear's Revenge with us in 2011. Ruth, Ollie and I have always been at the core of operations, with multiinstrumentalist Jim Mortimore joining us in 2012 and most recently singer/guitarist Raevennan Husbandes became part of the fold, and we're going to be making a new record with this line-up, which is

really exciting. You always learn so much from brilliant players, but the changes in personnel have also been frustrating. You have to really want to be a touring musician to make it work; you have to be really stubborn - it's not for everyone.

What qualifies someone to be a Moulette? Instrumental versatility? Utter disregard for the traditional boundaries of styles?

I don't know - we really ought to design a form and make this stuff easier! Instrumental versatility is a big one, but you also have to like people a lot to hang around with them a lot. Ruth and I started out playing with Ruth's brother, Rob, and a bunch of other guys. Then I played a tour in Manchester, where I met up with some other people; it's generally just playing music and making friends. I guess that's a very natural way to do it, which limits the potential pool unless you spend a lot of time playing with a lot of different people.

Tell me about your writing process, do you work independently, or collaboratively?

Both. Every song comes about slightly differently, and there have been different musicians involved in each record. In general, I start the song and Ollie finishes it. There's always tweaking to be done though, right to the end. It's hard to stop really. Arguably, they are never finished - if you keep playing them, they always evolve. We love being in the studio - the act of committing writing to record. It's like a laboratory of sounds to play with. We could happily be in that place for many months. We're writing the new record now and taking a different approach again... It's secret at the moment though.

What will inspire a Moulettes song?

All sorts. From the point of view of lyrics, people I meet, and things I see and read. Actually, all the things I've absorbed from the real world and put in the blender of my brain that re-emerges as something else in the world of Moulettes. I wrote a song recently about the halicephalobus Mephisto nematode worm. It looks like a happy vaccum cleaner bag with big teeth. They exist deep underground in extreme heat with no oxygen or sunlight and have confounded what scientists thought were the perimeters of life. I find the natural world totally fascinating. I like artists that make and inhabit their own world, who make something happen that is a tangible, idea-driven explosion. Björk, Janelle Monae, Liz Green - they're always experimenting and pushing boundaries.

Stewart Lee commits to long jokes; you have to immerse yourself in what an artist is doing to get the most out of it. Whenever you get that sensation that someone whether they're a writer, comedian, research scientist, or whatever their field - has found a new angle, it's exciting. Human brains are constantly surprising. We're on tour in Europe right now so we're constantly meeting new people and seeing new places - it's great for the mind.

The band features instrumentation that's drastically different from most bands. What sort of challenges does that bring when playing live?

It's a never-ending quest to get acoustic instruments sounding as good as they can while pushing the boundaries of how they can be used both for the delicate and rocking moments. We have done lots of experimenting with different pickups, preamps and amps. We also always tour with a sound engineer and our own desk, which means we can save our effect settings, cut down set-up time and have the tools at our disposal to get the production details we want. I'm very fortunate in that my father, Alan Miller, is a luthier, and he has custom built and modified our guitars and my electric cello. He's a woodworking genius and will not be shy of experimenting. He recently made a scalloped neck, nyckelharpa-bodied guitar! He also runs a residential course for guitar making [Alan Miller's website can be found at alanmillerguitars.co.uk]. My cello has been modified quite a bit. Gone are the days of constant squealing feedback. The

cello is a very difficult beast to amplify in a loud context - it has an enormous range and much of the warmth comes from sympathetic resonance of the strings and body. The sound I want in the band needs to be more focused, crunchy and powerful while still singing and warm.

When writing, do you have ideas of how the orchestration is going to work, or does the band bring that to life?

In the initial growth spurt of the song there is usually a strong inkling of the melodic themes and the textures that we'll develop, but when a song is cracking along nicely I find the mind becomes very suggestible and ideas spawn other ideas, especially when you've got great players in the room and everyone's in the mood. Personally, I love big cinematic orchestration and we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to do that on our record Constellations. We were privileged to be joined by some magnificent singers; Arthur Brown, the Unthanks, Emma Richardson [Band of Skulls], Blaine Harrison [Mystery Jets], as well as the legendary bass/ tuba player Herbie Flowers [Lou Reed, David Bowie]. Constellations was about celebrating collaboration with all these fantastic musicians; friends from our past and present.

All the evidence is that the Moulette's mind tank is constantly overflowing. We cannot encourage you enough to seek them out, particularly live, and enjoy the full experience yourself. You may not return the same person as when you go.

www.moulettes.co.uk





WORDS: DAVID MEAD **IMAGES:** SANTA CRUZ GUITAR COMPANY

'The beginning of this is back before email. I walked to the mailbox one day and there was an envelope on which the return address was E. Clapton, London, England.' So begins the remarkable story of a beautiful instrument in the hands of one of the most celebrated players on the planet and its occasionally bumpy rite of passage over the last 35 years...

David Mead talks to the Santa Cruz Guitar Company's Richard Hoover

n 1980, the Santa Cruz Guitar Company built a guitar specially for Eric Clapton. Over the past 35 years, they've seen the guitar returned to them twice for some tender loving care in the form of essential repairs. The first time was a case of too-long-in-the-sun, but the second time involved practically a full restoration, as the instrument had seen a lot of action. But we'll let Santa Cruz's Richard Hoover take up the story. So, after finding a letter in the mail with a very familiar name on the return label...

'I said to myself, "What a coincidence; there's another guy in England with a name like Eric Clapton," Richard chuckles. 'I opened the letter and it was hand-written, saying that EC had seen a picture of one of my guitars and how soon could he get one? He included a telephone number and so we spent a good part of the morning trying to do an international call because we'd never done one before. When we got through, Eric's colleague Diana asked if we'd received the order and we said, "Ahh, OK, we'll do it!"

named frets, and whilst finding the pages over, my eyes rested on our of your guitars. the beauty of its design made me grab pen and paper immedeately... what i would like to know, (being an impatient man) is, how soon could i by my hands on that particular model? I shall be at the above advess all through the months of june and july, and again, i coult experience an in the flesh meeting with that guitar

yours sincerely

Evil Chapton



'Eric ordered our FTC model, which is our F body shape, just like an old Gibson Everly Brothers guitar with a cutaway. It's a carved back like an archtop and the top is conventionally braced. So we made this guitar for him in 1980 – that's when it was finished, anyway - and there's a couple of pictures of it: there's one on the album Another Ticket with Eric wearing overalls playing the guitar, and there's another picture of him in front of his country house with the same instrument. So he had a nice run with it, but when he took it to the Bahamas it got left out in the sun and that didn't do it any good at all! So it got sent back to us for repair and, of course, in those kind of temperatures it was hot enough for the glues to become a little elastic. So, at that point, we reset the neck angle, shored some things up and sent it back to him.'

Clapton obviously loved the guitar because he ordered another one as backup and Richard believes that the second model was eventually sold in one of the auctions that EC held to raise funds for his Crossroads charity. As far as the first FTC was concerned, after the bad case of sunburn, nothing more was heard about it until a few years ago when British luthier Dave King contacted Richard, saying that he'd had the guitar sent to him for repairs, since it had obviously seen quite a lot of use in the intervening period.

'As I have no shame, I said, "Give it to us! Let us rebuild it because we have the original specs." I knew we could find some of the original woods and so on and there was a little shameless pride - we wanted to do it. So Dave sent it to us and when we received it, what we found out was that it had been through a lot. The top had been rebraced and, let me say, it was a remarkable job, in that I don't know how someone could have done that through the soundhole! We assumed that the top had been taken off, but there wasn't much evidence of anyone putting the original binding



back and so it was a mystery to us as to how this was done. But the top had been re-braced and it's possible that it had been done through the soundhole, because the work wasn't consistent with anyone I know; it was the quality of someone working blind. We knew that this guitar had been overheated which had caused distortion and so perhaps this was a way to flatten the top back out, but it had also made it incredibly rigid and not very responsive. Also, someone had begun the process of trying to work on the guitar - not Dave King - in that the fingerboard was cut off and the dovetail joint at the neck had been filled with epoxy. The neck itself was compromised, too; I think it was delaminating a little bit. So if we had been in the museum







restoration business, the Hippocratic Oath is not only "don't do any harm", but it's also, "don't do anything that can't be undone in the future when better techniques have become available". So really, that's the approach that we take on the restoration of any guitar that has either a dollar or an emotional value. We would have been pleased to lovingly restore it using all the original components, but to a degree it really wasn't possible, because there was too much damage and too much alteration already. So our best judgement was this: since we were the original builders, we could take the liberties of adding new components and doing some reconstruction.'

So began the long process of painstaking restoration. Every separate component of the guitar was gauged, the intent being to keep as much of the original instrument as possible and only replace parts where it was absolutely necessary to do so.

'In our judgement, it was best to replace the top with similar wood – in fact it was wood from the same era – and to brace it in the

same fashion that we originally did. The only alteration was to put the top in a slight radius, which is something that we learned the hard way, along with every other maker. A top that is flat and pulled into a loaded position by the strings has the tendency to raise behind the bridge and push in to the front, and that shortens the top and necessitates a neck reset at some time in the future. A radiused top is not visible, but it adds strength to the guitar and actually improves the projection of it. We don't build by measurement, we build by frequencies and flexibility; that's how we gain control of sound. So the braces wouldn't measure identically to the original, but they would give the original sound. We wanted EC to get this guitar and go, "Wow! That's the guitar I loved in the first place..." and rekindle his appreciation

The back was intact and the sides were fine, but the neck had too much distortion from the delamination and, in my opinion, the chance of getting the epoxy out of the dovetail without damaging the body was too small. So we had

to saw the neck off at the body joint and then rout out the dovetail for a new neck. We would have salvaged the fingerboard, the overlay on the peghead and the original inlay, but the fingerboard had been compromised by refretting and there was a piece of it missing from a previous attempt at restoration. So we used an old fingerboard that we had and decided that we could save the overlay. The inlays are special; they're shell from Tahiti and it's the outer part of the shell that's gold; it's extremely rare and protected now, but we contacted the people that we bought it from way back then and, although retired, they dug around and found it for us.'

'The overlay we matched with ebony, but the inlay is almost comical to me because this is something I cut by hand back in 1980 when we'd been in business four years and, although I thought that we knew everything in the world, when I look at some of that work it makes me wince a little bit. If you compare the inlay in the pictures to what we do today it lacks refinement and it looks a little cartoonish – but nonetheless, it's original!'



So all the parts were assembled and the restoration began. I asked Richard to detail the spec of Clapton's reborn FTC model.

fingerboard and peghead.'

'The top is German spruce, which did actually come from Germany, and it's a Picea abies, which is the same as Swiss and Italian and so forth, but it grows in a different climate with different nutrients and mineral content in the soil. So it's very specific and we were lucky in that we had a sister set that we could use to replace it. It was old when we got it and today it has another 35 years on it, so it's probably a 70-year-old top; that's beautiful, because we didn't want to take an old guitar and make it sound new. One of the things that makes older guitars sound better is the age of the wood; with ageing, the resins - the sticky stuff - polymerise and become more like crystal and more resonant. That stuff doesn't dry by evaporation and so you really can't accelerate that process.

'The flamed maple back and sides I bought in Germany as part of a cello set and the back is

carved by hand and tuned to the air chamber like a violin or cello. It's all original, which is a good thing because I don't know if I could come up with that again. The idea is that it has the power and projection of an archtop, but the sustain of a flat top guitar. The neck is also from the original source; it's Eastern US maple which is heavier than the European variety that they use for violins and cellos. The reason for this is that it's part of the sound of that guitar; when you put additional weight and density in the neck, it blocks the vibration from the body and gives the guitar more focus, better projection and separation between the notes. If you think of a conventional jazz archtop, the neck is maple which is heavy, the peghead is really big, which adds weight, and they used weighty gears like the old Grover Imperials that were on some of the jazz guitars. So by having that mass and weight in the neck you really focus the projection, and using Eastern US maple instead of the European

on the inside cover of his Another Ticket

album. Main image: The restored guitar

was a decision for sound. The black-white-black around the top is violin purfling and is also from the original source; a good part of all this has been thoughtfully sourced.

'Like the top, it made way more sense to use contemporary fret wire that wears better and plays better than what we had available 35 years ago. Using the old frets? It's cute, but it makes no sense; they were pitted and worn and although they'd be original, we were really hoping that Eric would get this guitar, fall in love with it and actually play it. When we took out the old frets there were enough of them to give one to everyone in the shop!

And what about feedback from Slowhand himself? 'We heard from Clapton's manager who said that we'd be pleased to know that Eric keeps the guitar at his house and he inferred that that's a big deal and our testimony to the fact that all of this was successful.'

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Learn to play 'Keep Your Hands Off Her' by Leadbelly

aving slipped over the Mexican border in the 1800s as a derivative of the bajo sexto (a 12-string Mexican instrument), the 12-string guitar found its way into the hands of a highly talented lady by the name of Lydia Mendoza. She became an iconic figure in Tex-Mex border music, with her powerful voice and delivery, supported brilliantly by her 12-string playing. She was born in Houston, Texas, in 1916 and was taught by her mother and grandmother to play a variety of musical instruments. In 1928, when she was just 12 years old, the legendary Okeh Records signed up her family group and recorded around 20 songs in Spanish, for which they were paid \$140. Lydia also went down the well-trodden road of entertaining in cafés and plazas. One such appearance that was well-received led to Lydia being signed for her first radio broadcast; she then signed to appear regularly on the station.

Now, many of us who have experienced listening to a strolling mariachi band whilst enjoying a few tequilas will appreciate that there are some brilliant musicians in their midst and that it is a great grounding for talent to learn their trade. Such was the case with Lydia, and she was lucky that she did it with her family alongside. One of Lydia's famous songs which was recorded for Bluebird Records in 1934 was entitled 'Mal Hombre' (Evil Man) and earned her the grand sum of \$60. Her star was indeed on the rise and by the start of World War II she was the most well-known female Spanish language singer on the Tex-Mex border, helped to fame by her Acosta 12-string, which she used with great skill to enhance her soulful songs.

The Acosta 12-string was not a bajo sexto and was at the time referred to in Spanish as a "guitarra doble". Acosta instruments were made in San Antonio, which became known for their fine instruments. Bajo sextos in the main are tuned lower than the guitarra doble and, from accounts, Lydia tuned her guitar down to B, as did Leadbelly.

This leads me on to the 12-string tab for this month. Leadbelly recorded some great songs

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF HER ARR. PAUL BRETT









during his lifetime; some became iconic songs in the standard catalogue and others were just really good solo tunes. 'Keep Your Hands Off Her' is the song (with some cheeky lyrics) tabbed here. The art to accompanying it on a

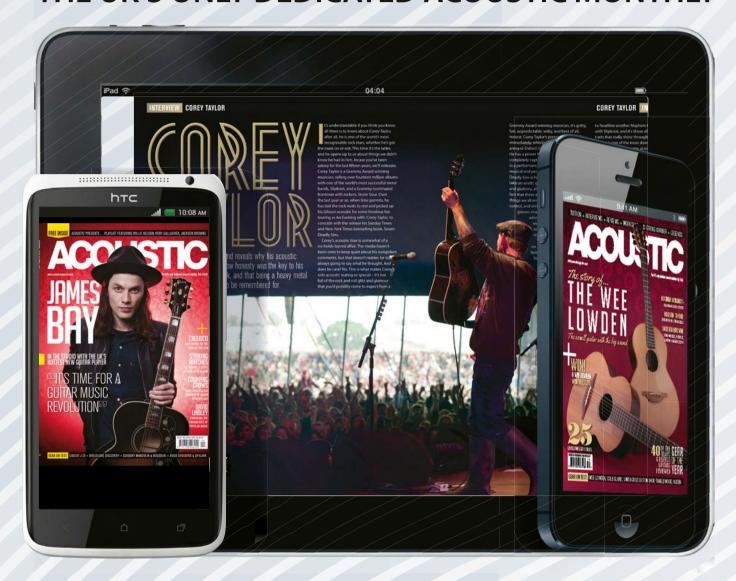
APP EXTRA DOWNLOAD THE ACOUSTIC APP TO HEAR PAUL PLAY 'KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF HER' 12-string is to pick the octaves as cleanly as you can. If you have trouble with the speed at first, practice playing it slowly and then, when you have confidence, speed it up.

Paul Brett



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COLLECTORS' COLUMN

Paul Brett revisits the Kay Musical Instrument Company and their Airline archtop

y the time you read this, my vintage guitar collection will be on display at The Garden Rooms, Tennants Auctioneers in Leyburn, North Yorkshire. It runs from April 1 through to the May 31 and is free to view. Instruments on display date from the 1700s upwards with a great collection of early blues acoustics. Neil Harpe, a great artist, author, and the world's foremost authority on Stella guitars has supplied the backdrop artwork. I will also be auctioning some of my collection at Tennants on June 20 - this will also be online. If you want to reserve a catalogue, check out the Tennants website. The Garden Rooms is a brand new £8m build exhibition centre in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales and it has great facilities, including a café and restaurant. There is parking onsite, too, so if you fancy a day out or spend a relaxing weekend in the beautiful countryside, get along and have a look at my collection - this is the only time that it will be under one roof. Yes, it's hard after collecting all these years to part with many, but others owned them before me and if you do bid, then bid with the knowledge that you can (as with collectors' items) turn a profit in future years if that's what you want to do.

I always keep an eye out for the "odd" guitar and one of my favourites is the black and white Airline archtop made by Kay in the 1960s. It really looks the part! Surprisingly enough, however, this retro offering actually plays and sounds well. Going back a few years from that, to what could be considered Kay's heyday, the company was highly favoured by the amplified bluesmen. Kay was established in the 1890s and was taken over by jukebox maker Seeberg in 1965, becoming one of the largest manufacturers of musical instruments in the States subsequently. It made instruments carrying brand names like Stromberg, Kay Kraft, and Recording King (Gibson also made these), Dobro, National, Oahu, Paramount,

S.S.Maxwell, Airline, Supertone and Silvertone for Sears and other catalogue companies, the most notable being Montgomery Ward. It is said that Kay was on a par with Gibson in the 1950s, with endorsement models from the great Barney Kessel and Jimmy Reed. It's interesting to see other bluesmen who used Kay: Sleepy John Estes, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy and Lightning Hopkins. The great slide player Elmore James played a Kay dreadnought with added electrics - a DeArmond Rhythm Chief Model 1000. Kay built both cheap and expensive guitars, and, under the Stromberg Voisinet and Kay Kraft brands, they produced the innovative Venetian style guitars, as well as the Kay Kraft adjustable neck models. These could transform from classic style to steel by the adjustment of a mechanism located in the heel joint of the neck. In fact, they carried two large internal wing nuts for this purpose. Ry Cooder is one notable user of these guitars. They are unique in their own right because of this simple adjustment that, on an archtop, is by far a better option than to have a neck reset. I am fortunate that my Kay Kraft still has all the beautiful gold decals in place, giving the guitar an aesthetic appeal. These are not easy to source in good condition but, if you are a serious collector, they are well worth tucking away for a rainy day.

Someone recently asked me about the value of collecting Martin acoustics. To get your hands on a serious piece of Martin finery from the 30s or 40s - which, in my opinion, are the best years - would set you back a small fortune and the rest. They are undoubtedly

tucking away under their bed, but very few of the iconic models from the past. Still, if you can afford a Martin from the golden era, get your credit out - it'll be one of the best investments you make.

Paul Brett

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ne of the more popular uses of a loop pedal is to create an alternative cover version of a popular song. One look at YouTube and you'll see thousands. Some are fantastic, some less so. What makes those that work sound so good?

It's important to decide whether your cover version will be as close to the original as possible or if it is more your own interpretation. If you think about the most successful covers, they often tend to be the ones that reimagine the original tune completely. Johnny Cash's version of the Nine Inch Nails song

'Hurt' is a good example, stripping away the arrangement to just a guitar and vocal.

The first thing to do is work out what the key elements are of the song you intend to cover and how many of them you want to try to replicate. A rock song may have a more riff-based structure and a jazz ballad might feature some more extravagant chords. You can always throw away all the elements of the track and just keep the melody and change the rhythm and the chords. Try a few different variations and focus on making the song unique.

Some loop performers add other instruments, from a harmonica or shaker to a full drum kit, to create arrangements as close as possible to the original song. You can do so much with just an acoustic guitar; you can create a guitar orchestra once you learn a few simple arrangement techniques and work out multiple chord positions across the neck. You may find that a guitar and a couple of pedals are all you need.

This month, we'll look at a straightforward pop-type chord progression and we'll make the most of it using loops. Our initial sequence is C, E, Am and F. This sequence has been used in numerous pop songs.

In **example 1** we're just going to set up a single strummed chord at the start of each bar at a slow tempo. Hit loop record on your pedal and record in **example 1** and let it loop. This is a very minimal start to your cover version. Initially, keep it simple so that when we build it up later it'll sound more effective. You could start with an even more minimal loop, with just a bass-line or a rhythm, then sing over that before you bring any chords in at all. It's up to you.

Once **example 1** is looping round, you can add your melody either on your guitar (if it's an instrumental) or vocals. Remember, your lead instrument should reflect where you are in your song and arrangement. Start gently and then build things up towards the end. Dynamics in music are the key to keeping an audience interested. If you make one section loud, try making another quiet (it worked for the Pixies). Vary your melody and phrasing, perhaps staccato in one section and then more fluid later on. With loops, we often build up layers featuring lots of different guitar parts. To make the loud sections really work, place them next to quiet sections, dropping the loops in and out.

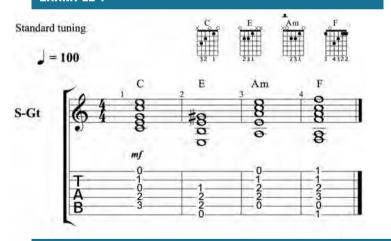
Example 2 features some simple arpeggios over our initial chord sequence. This will help to start to build things up. Hit loop record on your looper pedal and overdub these chords. Once these arpeggios are recorded you can think about adding some other arpeggios in different chord positions across the neck. Try and learn each chord in as many positions as possible across the instrument; this will open up lots of possibilities for different sounds.

Example 3 consists of some arpeggios of the same chords in different positions. Notice that I've varied the rhythm slightly to give emphasis to different parts of the picking sequence - this will help to keep things interesting; it's quite a subtle thing but it can be very effective. With each layer, try and add something interesting both rhythmically and harmonically.

As we build our arrangement, we might want to add some more rhythmic elements. This could be in the form of hitting the body of the guitar, or some more straightforward strumming, as shown in **example 4**. Hit loop record overdub on your loop pedal and record in these chords. As ever, if you find it difficult, the best way to tighten up is to play to a metronome while tapping your foot along to the beat, to get your hands and feet working together.

Next, we could add a bass-line, possibly with an octave pedal added

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2

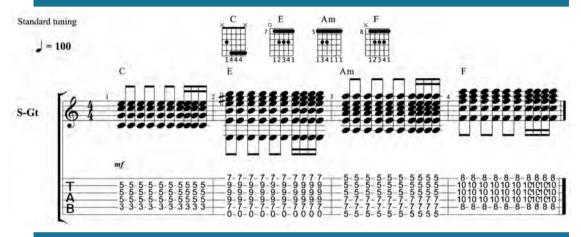
Standard tuning



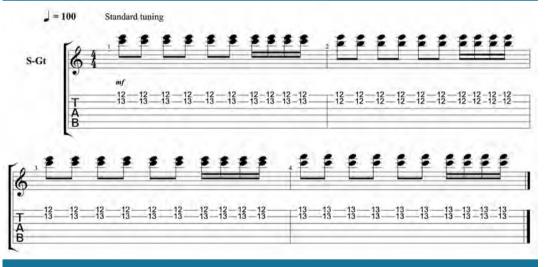
S-Gt



EXAMPLE 4



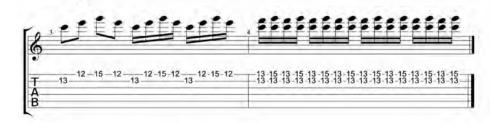
EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 6









MATT STEVENS

Instrumental Composer

Matt Stevens is a musician and composer from London. An instrumental artist, he uses an acoustic guitar and sampler to create multilayered tracks live. His music has been described as "a guitar orchestra". He plays live all over the UK and listens to Sonic Youth, Carcass, Nick Drake, Cardiacs and King Crimson. He is constantly recording new music for several projects.

www.mattstevensguitar.com

to get lower bass notes or, as we are going to in this case, some more melodic parts. **Example 5** shows some diads (two-note chords) at the top to add some intensity to our song for the end section of the piece. You'd only add these in at the end. Hit loop record on your pedal and add these towards the end of the arrangement. Our final layer is example 6, which is a little melody to finish things off right at the top of the neck of the guitar.

A good cover version is about combining the right song with the right artist, with the correct arrangement. When you play a cover version with a loop pedal the limitation of the set-up forces you to play things in certain ways. You can't just start with all the instruments and loop layers in place at the start of the song - you have to build it up. The key is to embrace these limitations and create something exciting, unique and interesting with the tools that you have. Then, all that's left to do is to post it on YouTube and get millions of people to watch it - easy!

Matt Stevens

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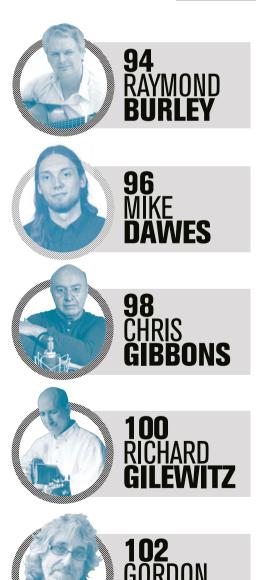
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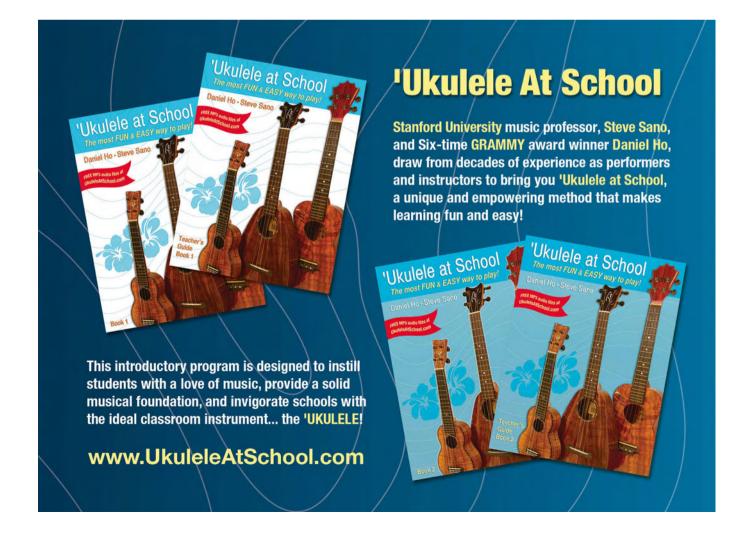
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RAYMOND BURLEY

Classical Guitarist

Raymond Burley is an accomplished classical guitarist, composer and arranger. One of his most recent projects was the album *Double Vision* – a collection of Giltrap pieces arranged for two guitars.

www.raymondburley.com

his month, I'd like to concentrate on another perennial favourite from the classical guitar repertory, Alonso Mudarra's Fantasia X. Its subtitle "que contrahaze le harpa en la manera de Ludovico" translates to "which imitates the harp in the style of Ludovico". Mudarra (1510 - 1580) was a Spanish composer for the vihuela and fourcourse guitar; he is the composer of the earliest surviving guitar music. The majority of his vihuela music appeared in the collection Tres libros de musica en cifras para vihuela, published in Seville in 1546. The second of the three volumes contains eight works, each in several movements, arranged by mode. The pieces include fantasias, pavanes, variations, galliards, tientos and songs. The aforementioned Ludovico was the celebrated harpist for King Fernando el Católico.

Mudarra's favoured instrument appears to have been the vihuela, which is, briefly, an instrument with a guitar-shaped body and

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

ALONSO MUDARRA

A CLASSICAL PIECE FROM A RENAISSANCE COMPOSER



renaissance lute tuning. By lowering the third string of the modern guitar

by a semitone, we can reproduce this tuning, although one should also

bear in mind that, at that time, pitch was not yet standardised. By placing

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a capo at the second or third fret of the guitar, it's possible to achieve a lightness of sound appropriate to this style of music.

Mudarra's Fantasia was published

in tablature. For many years, the piece was performed on the guitar incorrectly; the harp style mentioned in the subtitle being emphasised by deliberately fingering as many adjacent notes as possible on different strings. Although the effect is attractive, it's not an authentic approach. I have avoided this temptation and located the

notes exactly as Mudarra intended, the only additional feature being my suggested left-hand fingerings. By holding some fingers down beyond their printed note values, this will provide a certain amount of campanella effect. If you are not familiar with the piece, it may be worth spending a short time listening to it before you attempt to play it. One thing you'll notice is how modern some of the harmonies and syncopations sound. At the beginning of bar 126, you'll see the composer's comment in Spanish, but translated at the end of the piece - if you play the odd-sounding notes with conviction, it will sound convincing. The term "false relation" mentioned in the footnote refers to two notes played, or sounding, simultaneously with the same letter name but with one altered, for example, the D natural in the bass with a D# above it in bar 129. With the best will in the world, there is no way to avoid a clash; but, of course, the effect is intentional.

Apart from the occasional lefthand stretch, there is not too much to cause concern, although you may find the right-hand fingering creates more problems than the left, thanks to a combination of arpeggios and scales. Dynamics, of course, are never suggested in music from this period, so experiment. In bar 136, the barre necessary for the opening chord must be lifted to release the open E, but make sure the bass B is not released early. I hope you enjoy this piece from a less familiar renaissance composer.

Raymond Burley



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MIKE DAWES

Fingerstyle Virtuoso

Mike Dawes is an acclaimed globetrotter and wizard impersonator working with the Candyrat label. His solo work has seen him perform in all corners of the world and his studio CV includes sessions with the likes of Gotye and Newton Faulkner. He is also the right-hand axe man to Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues and is usually sat in some airport writing for us here at *Acoustic* magazine.

www.mikedawes.com

ongratulations on making it past the rather tricky bridge section, everyone. I'm delighted to inform you that the uphill struggle is complete and in this issue we will conclude 'The Impossible' with the relatively straightforward outro of the song.

Throughout these 'Impossible' lessons, you have been introduced to a variety of complex modern techniques on the acoustic guitar, as well as musical ideas that you can apply to compositions on any instrument. Hopefully you have also gained a performance piece!

As before, today we are in DADGAD tuning with a partial capo on fret four. The top string is left open. Tabbed frets are illustrated as the true "un-capoed" fret, as is common with partial capo tablature. For example, a fourth fret note on the bottom five strings would be

TECHNIOUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

THE IMPOSSIBLE

THE CONCLUDING PART TO MIKE'S PERCUSSIVE BEHEMOTH

EXAMPLE 1





EXAMPLE 1 CONTINUED



EXAMPLE 2



"open", while an open note on the top string would be completely open, as there is no capo present.

EXAMPLE 1

The outro begins with another

polyrhythmic pattern sticking to the XY = YX formula we looked at last time. This time, the left hand is hammering that original pattern of five throughout, while the right hand picks a pattern of seven.

Once the pattern of five is played seven times, or vice versa, the sequence repeats with a different fretted note on the top string. This is the signal to the listener of the completion of the phrase.

As you can see, the "melody note" begins as a fourth fret note, then shifts to seven, then 11, and then six. You'll have to really twist your fingers around to flow into these cohesively. You may also notice that in the bar before each change, there is an open bottom string being played. This acts as another signal to the listener. It's the one-bar warning!

EXAMPLE 2

As in example 1, we must squeeze our index finger under the capo to hit that fourth fret top string note as the melody fades into the mechanical noises that started the song. The type of capo really makes a difference here, as some chunkier models will prevent you from getting into that fret. I'm using a regular G7th Performance Capo, positioned so that it only frets strings two through six.

As you'll notice, the rest of the outro is almost identical to the start of the song, with the forearm reaching behind the capo and strumming those displaced rhythms. To conclude the song, two violent downstrokes catch the open top string, before a violent F# power chord rounds off the piece. Let that reverb ring.

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of the song. Please do review the official YouTube video for a visual reference as well as the new 'Impossible' iOS app should you need any further instruction. See you next time for something completely different.

Mike Dawes

- -Extended tone life
- -Consistent performance
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CHRIS GIBBONS

Composer

Chris is not only a guitar teacher but also a composer and producer who has worked on many orchestrations for television and recordings alike. He has many years of experience both in performance and helping others develop their playing potential to its best.

www.chrisgibbonsmusic.co.uk

n the last issue, we looked at the Em7 tuning for Dobro. In this issue, we are going to explore some techniques you can use on a standard open G tuning: DGDGBD, low to high.

When playing the blues, you are probably familiar with the standard chord structure used. This applies to major and minor keys, but here we are focusing on the major key. Just to recap, there are three major chords in every key: those built on the first, fourth and fifth degrees on the scale. So in the key of G, this would be the G, C and D chords.

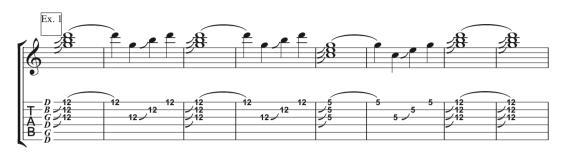
Using the tone bar in open G tuning, you can form a G chord in the open position (just open strings), the C chord at the fifth fret, and D chord at the seventh fret.

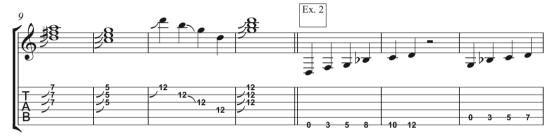
So, a simple Dobro part would be to slide the tone bar up to the required fret at the start of each bar, and sustain the chord by applying a little pressure and

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

AN INTRO TO THE DOBRO

BLUES FOR SQUARE-NECK DOBRO















vibrato to the bar. You can pluck some or all of the strings, or play a simple picking pattern at each bar position.

Let's have a look at **example 1** to see some of the possibilities. Here, the little curved lines indicate a slur or slide into the note in question; this is, of course, a signature element of slide technique. You may also vary the rhythm and timing if you wish, making the examples your own by experimentation.

Now you've probably seen a good slide or Dobro player soloing, either live or via numerous YouTube clips, and the player doesn't just play chords at the positions noted above, but moves freely up and down the fretboard, filling in the notes in between.

In **example 2,** I've mapped out some of the most common moves for a blues piece in G on each string in turn. I'd like you to slowly play each note in turn on each string, paying special attention to the tuning accuracy and striving for a clean tone.

It helps if you make sure that your left hand has the side of its palm behind the bar (the headstock side), placed firmly against the strings to eliminate rattles and buzzes; you can also use fingers on your right hand to mute the strings you are not picking. This will take some



practice, but it is a skill worth persevering with.

In **example 3** we have combined the various techniques in this lesson to play a basic 12-bar blues, using individual note passages together with the familiar chordal slides.

I hope you find this month's piece enjoyable, and, as ever, please experiment with your own ideas based on these simple precepts. Make note of attractive moves that you discover with your experiments and try to incorporate them into your

performances whenever possible.

Open mic nights are a great place for you to sit in with a couple of musicians as a "newbie" slide player, so get a few good licks under your belt and see how far you can travel.

Chris Gibbons



- -Extended tone life
- -Consistent performance
- -Easy on your fingers
- -Smooth feel
- $\hbox{-Reduced finger squeak} \\$





RICHARD

Fingerstyle Guitarist, Composer, and Educator

Richard Gilewitz is a lively entertainer of six- and 12-string finger gymnastics. His signature style delivers a technical diversity of blending the classical field with the steel string world to create an exploration of fingerstyle guitar, with over three decades of well-honed experience.

www.richardgilewitz.com

've been asked repeatedly over the years to write an article on the concept of transfers. However, I never quite felt like I had enough things to say, so that afterwards it wouldn't be obvious that I had left out a crucial point. Well, I finally got over that hump, which doesn't mean that I won't leave something out, but at least now I'm not going to worry about it!

When creating a passage from note to note, chord to chord, note to chord, or silent spot to busy spot, the most important element is more than likely to be time. But in the long run, there's an awful lot more to consider than just that one little musical nugget.

There's groove or feel, note treatments such as staccato or vibrato, pushing or pulling a beat, and the dynamics of volume.

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

TAKING THE TRICKINESS OUT OF TRANSFERS



These are just the start of a few considerations to think about.

Another crucial aspect often overlooked is the producer of the music. Yes, you. No matter how good you are with a metronome, playing with other players, jamming, knowledgeable about music or experienced on the stage or in the studio, if the player is locked up then none of it will show itself properly. What I'm talking about here is the human condition. What is your posture like; your breathing, your focus - or lack thereof? Where

is your focus? Can you play with your eyes closed and see your hands? Or, better yet, can you see the music?

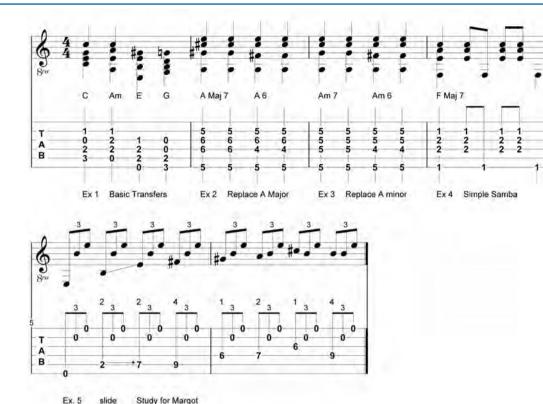
Other than ample experience as a player, performer, recording artist and perhaps a few decades of therapy in various forms, I believe I do have an idea of one of the things that should help to grease your wheels on the way to stardom. That thing is technique.

I've concocted six measures (bars of music) addressing the concept and techniques involved in what I feel are very effective

transfers for when motioning from one miniscule musical event to another. It does not always involve fluidity in the way you might possibly think.

It is not the beautiful sounds of a flowing waterfall alone. Sometimes it's a well-placed big bag of rocks. Therein lies the opening to your dynamic world as a musician. Although I am predominantly a fingerstyle acoustic guitar player, I believe this applies to all instruments and genres of music. These techniques in concept all apply,





whether I'm listening to a banjo, cellist, or bassoon player.

slide

THE SIX BARS:

Ex. 5

Exercise 1 in bar one involves four very basic chords, which are not intended for this exercise to flow together musically, but which involve anchor or pivot fingers and group movements. The chord fragments are simply C, A minor, E, and G. I set them up so that, as a fingerpicker, you can simply pluck the collection of four notes with your plucking hand using your thumb, index, middle and ring fingers in a group. This exercise is for the fretting hand though, since you engage in minimal movement. In a nutshell, when moving from the C to A minor, you should only move one finger. When moving from the A minor to the E, every finger moves simultaneously as a group straight up. When navigating

to the G, your second finger on string five, fret two, remains as your anchor finger.

Exercise 2 in bar two involves a couple of more interesting chords, with a bit of theory thrown in for fun. For now, do not worry about why they are called what they are; that's a different subject. We will just focus on transfers for this exercise, though.

The first chord, A7, is played by placing your fretting hand index on string six, fret five. Finger two is on string two, fret five. Finger three is on string four, fret six. Finger four is on string three, fret six. You might notice that three of the fingers resemble an A minor chord with your index finger over the top of it, on string six. Also, realise that string six names the chord, so if you move the entire shape back two frets you will have G7.

When transferring to the

A6 chord, only finger four remains anchored down. Three moves will need to be made in the transfer. The second finger travels to string six, fret five while the first finger (or index) moves to string four, fret four. Your third finger will move down to string two, fret five. Try to slowly navigate all three fingers into place simultaneously instead of sequentially.

Now, a fascinating bit of theory here. If you are playing a tune that utilises an A major chord for four beats, you can play this bar in its place for some more interesting sounds. Not for everything, but something to consider as a nice chord substitution, perhaps?

Exercise 3 involves something identical in concept to exercise 2 - where the two selected chords can essentially replace an A minor chord. You can simply play the first chord, Am7, by

placing your index finger down as a barre and you're good to go. Some folks prefer placing their second finger on string six and applying a barre with finger three at fret five, strings four, three, and two.

Exercise 4 introduces you to a very basic samba rhythm. The chord I selected is F major 7, which you should notice is the same shape as the earlier A major 7 moved back to fret one.

Watch your timing. Only strike the bass notes on beat one, the "and" of beat two, and four. In time, you can allow it to swing just a bit. Be sure to try this rhythm with various chords; it's great fun.

Exercise 5 consists of two bars from an original piece by my guitar teacher, David Walbert, titled 'Study For Margot'. In this very small fragment, your goal is to hold down the previous finger, allowing the notes to flow into each other. Each beat is a triplet, counted as "one-and-a", and the notes are plucked with the thumb, followed by index and then middle. The fretting hand notes are indicated above the tablature.

From beat two to three, use your second finger on both frets two and seven, and attempt to present a graceful and relaxed slide without removing the pressure from the finger. This sound of a finger slide is known as a glissando.

Try to achieve a smooth or staccato sound in exercises one through four. Sometimes, allowing the note or chords to breathe out can prove to be effective or preferable, and the same goes for the staccato more of a chopping effect. It all depends on the music - and you. **Richard Gilewitz**

- -Extended tone life
- -Consistent performance
- -Easy on your fingers
- -Smooth feel
- -Reduced finger squeak





GORDON GILTRAP

Instrumental Artist

Gordon Giltrap is pioneer of acoustic music in the UK. His extensive discography gives evidence of a skilled musician whose expertise lay in composition and arrangement. His pieces are played and enjoyed by young and old alike. www.giltrap.co.uk

elcome back to my column. I'm going to start a new series, exploring the DADGAD tunes from my back catalogue. Over many years, I have written quite a few pieces in this well-loved tuning, influenced by the late, great Davy Graham from the early 60s.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge the fine work that my friend and fellow columnist David Mead does within these pages. David is a great guitar player, educator and writer, and has done more than anyone else I know to fully explore the potential of DADGAD tuning. What I'm about to show you is what I have done with it over the years.

I'm starting with a pretty straightforward old chestnut of mine: 'A Christmas Carol', as inspired by my favourite Dickens story.

Let us first look at **section A**, focusing on a couple of challenging stretches, although because they occur high up the neck it does make

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

GILTRAP'S DADGAD

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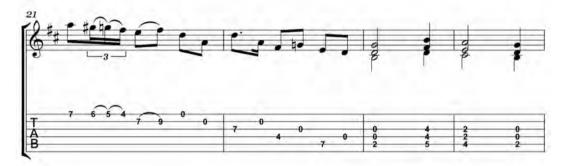






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things a tad easier. They happen in bars eight and 10, and are repeated in bars 40 and 42 in section C.

Moving on to **section B** at bars 17, 21, 25 and 26. Here we find some chromatic pull-offs using all four fingers. If you're not used to these four-note pull-offs, it will, of course, take a while to master. A little tip (not written on the score) is to play the seventh fret on the first string twice quickly, giving a

quick up beat and a definition and springboard to the riff. Give it a try - it may help.

In bar 26, you will notice the chromatic pull-off riff is played exactly the same but an octave

lower. It is simply the same hand movement played on the fourth string instead.

Moving back to section B bar 18; here you play the seventh fret on the third string with an open fourth string below it, followed by a slide up to the eleventh fret third string with the seventh fret fourth string below it - and then you slide quickly back down to the seventh fret third string with the fourth fret fourth string below it. Just take care of accurate fingering here.

The tune has a crotchet tempo of 80. There is plenty of opportunity for dynamic variation; for example, at the repeat sign in section A, one could try playing more forcefully.

There is a lot of reflection and, to a degree, sadness within the piece, so it is entirely up to you. Start gently and let the piece grow from there.

Many regard this as one of my most melodic pieces, and it gives me pleasure to share this 35-yearold Giltrap tune with you. There are many recorded examples of it - a notable version being by my friend and fellow columnist Raymond Burley on his superb album The Long Road Home. His version is in standard tuning. Ray and I also recorded a duo version on our Double Vision album.

I should like to dedicate this tune to my friend, the late Keith Dudley, who loved playing this piece. Thanks to Mark Thomson for transcribing the piece.

Gordon Giltrap



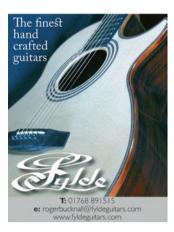
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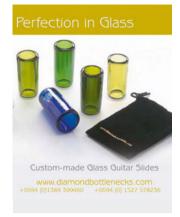
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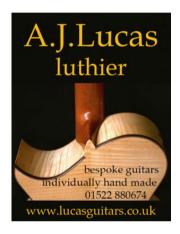
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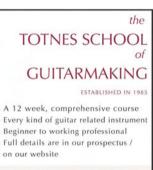


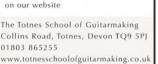


















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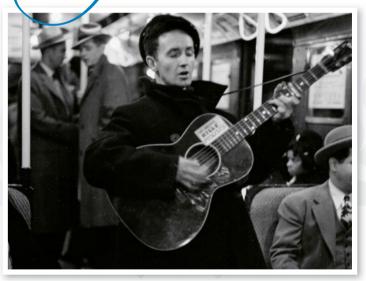
t's hard to cite a musician who's had a bigger influence on American folk music pre-1960 than Woody Guthrie. Casting a vast shadow, Guthrie influenced a veritable who's who of folk icons, including Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Joan Baez, Richie Havens and a slew of others who followed in his wake. Guthrie was a folk revolutionary standing for the social causes of his time, singing and composing songs about the issues of his day throughout his years as an active musician.

Timeworn classics such as 'This Land Is Your Land', 'Deportee',

'Do Re Mi', 'Grand Coulee Dam', 'Hard, Ain't It Hard', 'Hard Travelin'', and 'I Ain't Got No Home' are some of the thousand-and-something tunes he penned during his profligate career. Guthrie was an iconic figure, not just for his musicianship, but also for his support of the Great Depression Dust Bowl migrants, who were forced off their lands in Oklahoma to California in a mass exodus in the 1930s.

Born in 1912 in rural Oklahoma, Guthrie sprung from a family of music lovers. Both his parents played for pleasure and taught young Woody folk tunes that he soon learned to play on his guitar and harmonica. Guthrie's family endured much personal tragedy during his childhood, including the loss of his sister, financial ruin, and the institutionalisation of his mother, who was struck with a rare illness. When he turned 14, Guthrie and his siblings were left to raise themselves. As a teen, Woody began busking in the streets for food or money. As he played to survive, he unwittingly also honed his performing skills.

He married for the first time when he was only 19. When the Plains transformed into the infamous Dust Bowl, however, Guthrie left his wife and kids in 1935 to join the thousands of



"Okies" – migrants who departed the state of Oklahoma and who travelled west in search of work. Guthrie spent his time hitchhiking, riding freight trains and, when possible, performing his songs.

With his guitar and harmonica, Guthrie sang in the hobo and migrant camps, developing into a musical spokesman for labour and other left-wing causes. These hardscrabble experiences would provide the impetus for Guthrie's songs and stories, as well as grist for his future autobiography Bound For Glory. It was also during these years that Guthrie cultivated a love of the open road that stayed with him for decades.

In 1937, Guthrie arrived in California where he landed a job with partner Maxine "Lefty Lou" Crissman as a radio performer of traditional folk music in Los Angeles. The duo soon attained a loyal following from the Okies living in migrant camps across California.

In 1940, Guthrie's travels led him to New York City where he was well received by the NY bohemian movers and shakers. Through collaboration with Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax, Leadbelly and Will Geer, Guthrie's career bloomed, thanks to his populist lyrics in support of the struggling worker. Guthrie's success as a songwriter with the Almanac Singers helped launch him into the popular consciousness, procuring him even greater critical acclaim. In 1943, he divorced his first wife. A year later he recorded his most famous song, 'This Land Is Your Land' – an iconic anthem that has become a classic symbol of freedom.

During World War II, Guthrie enlisted in the Merchant Marine and began composing music with a more ardent antifascist credo (Guthrie was famous for performing with the slogan "This Machine Kills Fascists" emblazoned across his acoustic guitar).

On a Marine furlough, he married again and had four children while living in New York. This period in his life was his most musically abundant. By the late 1940s, Guthrie began to show symptoms of the rare neurological disease Huntington's Chorea, which had killed his mother. The disease impacted him so deeply that he decided to leave his family and hit the road with his protégé, Ramblin' Jack Elliott. Guthrie arrived in California, and began living in a compound owned by activists.

Guthrie's health deteriorated during the late 1950s and he became hospitalised until his death in 1967. Bob Dylan moved to New York City in the early 60s to seek out his idol and would later say of Guthrie's music, "The songs themselves were really beyond category. They had the infinite sweep of humanity in them."

While Guthrie passed away in 1967, his musical canon still inspires and incites. He was known to be a modest man who summed up his career as thus: "I like to write about wherever I happen to be. I just happened to be in the Dust Bowl, and because I was there and the dust was there, I thought I'd write a song about it."

Modesty aside, Guthrie's simple yet timeless music is part of American music history. ■





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